KSGU Volume 2

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These are the novel illustrations that were included in Volume 2

福井晴敏（ふくい・はるとし）

1968年、東京都墨田区生まれ。1998年に『Twelve Y.O.』で第44回江戸川乱歩賞を受賞し作家デビュー。『亡国のイージス』『終戦のローレライ』『Ｏｐ.ローズダスト』など著書、映画化作品多数。現在、月刊ガンダムエース誌上にて本作『機動戦士ガンダムＵＣ』を連載中。

COVER DESIGN
akihito sumiyoshi + fake graphics

Kadokawa Comics A

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

機動戦士ガンダムUC（ユニコーン）

2 ユニコーンの日（下）

福井晴敏

キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和
メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ
原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季

機動戦士ガンダムUC（ユニコーン）2
福井晴敏

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発行:角川書店

反政府組織『袖付き』とビスト財団の間で行われていた
『ラプラスの箱』を巡る謀議は、地球連邦軍の介入によって破局を迎えた。
コロニー内外で始まる戦闘。
オードリーを追って戦火の中を走るバナージは、純白のモビルスーツ《ユニコーン》と出会う。
人の革新――ニュータイプの力が覚醒した時、
《ユニコーン》はその真の姿を現した！
かつて『ガンダム』に胸を躍らせた大人たちに贈る
新たな宇宙世紀サーガ、緊迫の第2弾！！

機動戦士
ガンダムUC ユニコーン
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

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キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和
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かつて『ガンダム』に胸を熱くした大人たちよ、

今こそ内なる可能性（ニュータイプ）に目を向ける時が来た―― !!

『亡国のイージス』
『終戦のローレライ』の
福井晴敏
が放つ最新超大作!!

各界騒然！！
豪華スタッフが放つ未曾有のプロジェクト！
すべては小説から始まり、想像を超える世界へ――。

機動戦士ガンダムUC ② ISBN978-4-04-713970-1

世界を覆す力『ラプラスの箱』の謎を秘め、今、伝説の白いモビルスーツが覚醒する！

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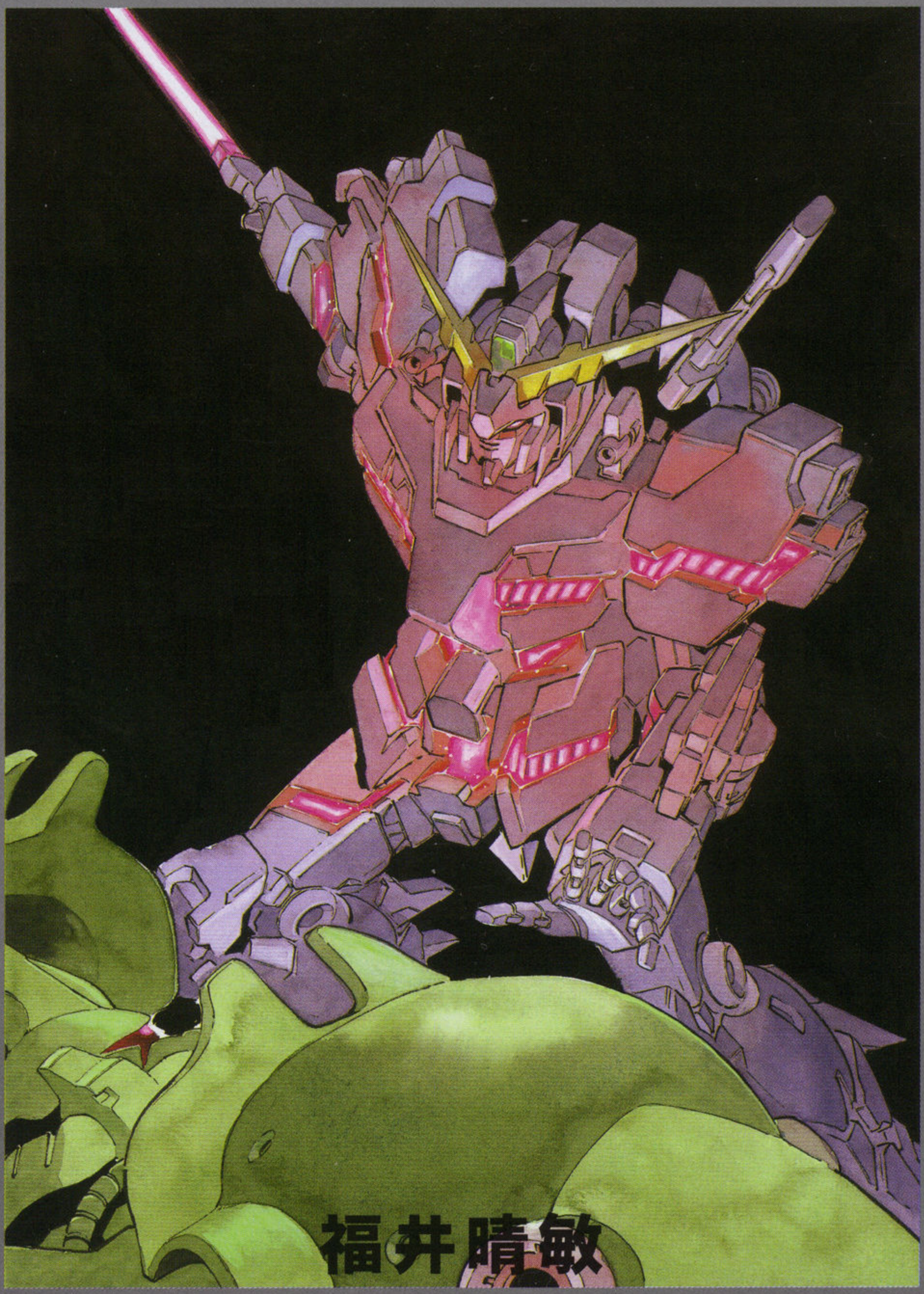
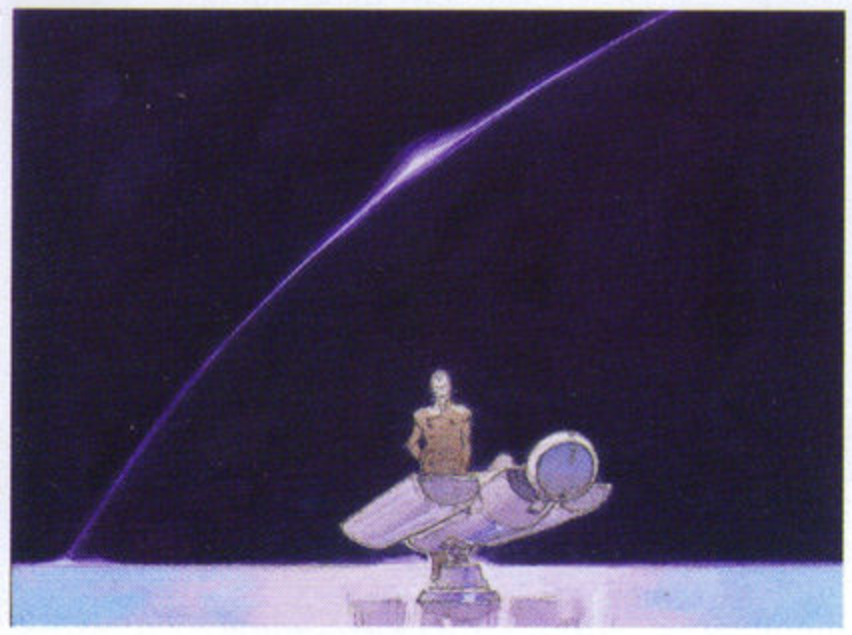
機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

2 ユニコーンの日（下）



福井晴敏

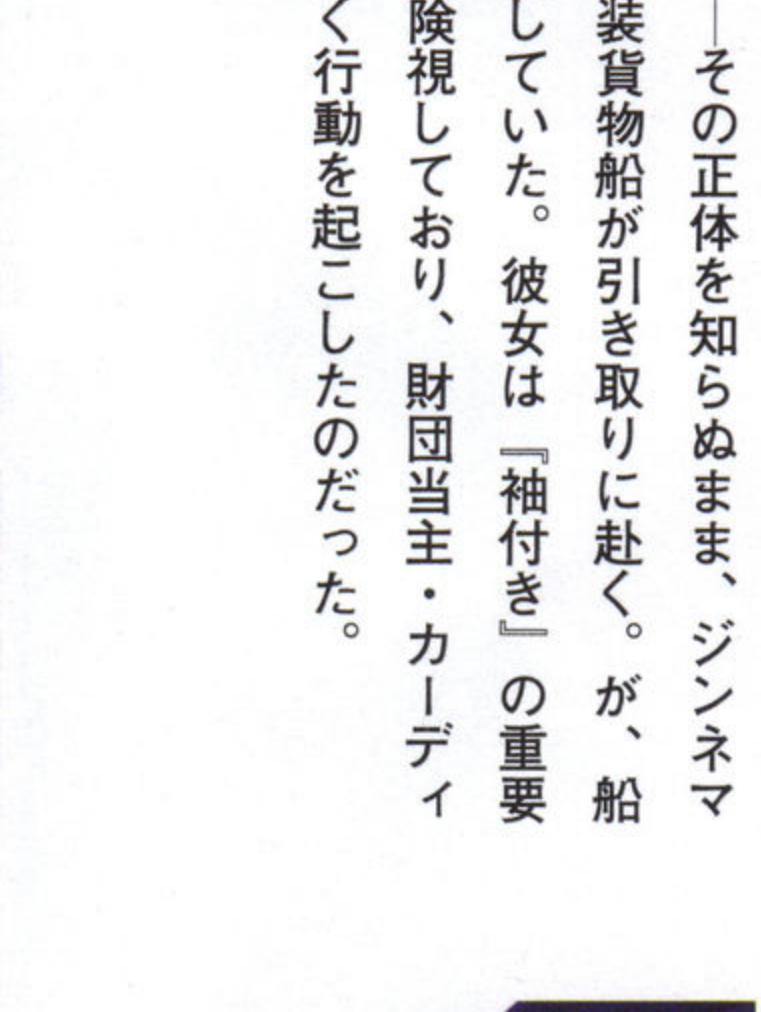
キャラクターデザイン・挿絵 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季



Previous to GUNDAM UC

前巻までのあらすじ

宇宙世紀0096――工業用スペースコロニー〈インダストリアル7〉で、秘密の取引が行われようとしていた。連邦政府に多大な影響力を持つビスト財団が、『袖付き』と仇名される反政府組織に『ラプラスの箱』と呼ばれる機密を引き渡そうとしていたのだ。開放されれば政府が転覆すると言われる『ラプラスの箱』――その正体を知らぬまま、ジンネマン率いる『袖付き』の偽装貨物船が引き取りに赴く。がが、船にはひとりの少女が密航していた。彼女は『袖付き』の人物ながらこの取引を危険視しており、財団当主・カーディアスの真意を確かめるべく行動を起こしたのだった。



アナハイム工業専門学校に通う学生、バナージ・リンクスは、オードリーと名乗るその少女を助けたことから、事件に巻き込まれてゆく。ジンネマンが差し向けた追手を巻いた二人は、コロニービルダー〈メガラニカ〉に辿り着いた。宇宙船の中とは思えない豪奢な屋敷の中、二人は、カーディアスと対面する。バナージはオードリーと行動を共にすることを望むが、カーディアスだけでなくオードリー自身にも拒絶され、一人取り残されるのだった。

その頃、『ラプラスの箱』の流出を阻止する密命を帯び、地球連邦軍の強襲揚陸艦《ネェル・アーガマ》も〈インダストリアル7〉に近づきつつあった。『ラプラスの箱』をめぐるそれぞれの思惑が今、〈インダストリアル7〉の地で交錯しようとしていた――。

Chapter 2 (continued)

Part 1

"Return back to the ship?"

It's 4.02pm. As the light of the artificial sun started to weaken, Marida was talking to the receiver in the public phone. (That's right). Zinnerman answered.

(End the search for the time being and come back before the deal begins. Same goes for Alec and Besson.)

It's been more than 2 hours since they lost her. They didn't have a way to break through the large construction area, and it's true that they were just wasting time. However, they ended their search too quickly. Marida looked at the electric car that was parked beside the public phone on the road. Alec, who was in the driver's seat, was staring at the neighboring building—the school compound of Anaheim Electronics. It's impossible to see from here , but Besson should be behind the school watching through the same method.

Of course, nobody could guarantee that the student will come back. But after the huge commotion in the construction area, it's impossible for him to stay there, and there're no other leads. Marida looked at the watch to see that there's still some time before the transaction's done, and said with a somewhat anxious voice, <'the girl' must have entered the space colony builder>.

"We know the identity of the student who helped her 'escape'. Most likely, it may be something related to the Foundation. Once we wait for him to come back…"

"That Foundation contacted us already. The location of the transaction is changed to the space colony builder."

The fingers holding onto the phone trembled. The Vist Foundation that made contact with 'her' is now requesting a change in location for the deal—and in their territory too. Feeling the irritation of having the initiative snatched from them, Marida asked: <what about the 'girl'?> (Play dumb) Zinnerman said.

(We have no idea of what their intentions are, but we can only pretend that we know anything. Go get ready just in case something happens.)

Then, shouldn't we be going to the colony builder together instead of going back to the 'Garencieres'? Marida wanted to say instinctively, but swallowed her words. The assumption here Zinnerman's thinking of isn't something that can be handled with just one or two people being on guard, but mobile suits that have to be on standby.

It'll be great if Vist Foundation, who deliberately opened their stronghold, hand her over. If not, at that time—Marida answered ' understood' as she watched the school gate of Anaheim Electronics. It seemed that it's after school, and the students that were in plainclothes were laughing and walking out from the gate to the electric car carpark.

What causes them to laugh like this? Marida saw a young woman pushing a baby cart along, walking beside them, and felt really happy. It's not because that she imagined these pedestrians getting involved in the 'assumed situation'. Once they're involved, it's easy for their lives to vanquish easily. However, they will never dream of such a thing. They never actually thought about their deaths actively or subconsciously, and think that today's just like yesterday. Marida was really unhappy as she understood that peace was just a mistake made by this group mentality, and that it was extremely fragile.

I took in too much air outside, she thought. Even though she wanted to capture that student called Banagher and interrogate him about 'her' whereabouts, she herself isn't suited to do this kind of work. She wanted to get rid of this tight-fitting clothing and return to the ship…

(It's finally time. Let's go check out what's in that treasure box.)

Zinnerman said through the phone, perhaps reading through her thoughts. Marida wasn't looking at the strangers, but looked up at the sky of the warm space colony that made her uncomfortable.

Part 2

Below Marida's feet, about 50m away from the inner walls, at the outer walls of Industrial 7 that's in direct contact with vacuum, two objects were closing in.

The larger one was more than 15m in diameter, and the two objects that were of irregular shapes look like normal pieces of rock in the shoal space region. The pilot of the <<Geara Zulu>> that was hidden on the back of the solar panel, Savoir, saw it. It's unknown whether it was a block of dirt from the destroyed portion of the space colony, or whether they're debris from some mineral refining satellite. Either way, it's moving at the same speed as Industrial 7, and even if it touches the space colony, it will only graze the outer wall. The port management's radar should have detected it. if they decide that there's danger, they can set up countermeasures like using the colony-defense missiles to change the trajectories and so on. Savoir made this conclusion, and didn't pay attention to the enlarged visual of the CG.

If he focused attention on a certain point, the overall surveillance will be eased. He has been watching outside alone for more than 12 hours, and he had already listened to the music he took out to listen to pass the time once. He felt that his concentration was weakening. He opened the visor of the helmet and used a tissue paper to wipe away the sweat. Savoir looked at the numerous windows on the all-view monitor. The 4 miniature camera devices that were set around the machine showed their visuals over to the cockpit of the Geara Zulu. There were the lights of a civilian ship that came into the dock, the subway lights that's running on the outer wall of the space colony, and the two blocks of rock that were closing in. Savoir checked that everything was normal, and thought that it will be over in another 3, 4 hours. Once the deal's done, he can return to the <<Garencieres>> and stretch his limbs nicely. He, who hasn't had more than a thousand hours of flying, was treated as a rookie by the crew of the <<Garencieres

>>, and is finishing a day's worth of recon without handing over his duties…

Suddenly, the surveillance camera showed a signal, and the broadcast channel music that was playing inside the cockpit became static. Savoir hurriedly put his hand on the arm-raker, amplified the volume of the high frequency wireless radio and concentrates his consciousness on the countless conversations through the statics. The signal vanished after about 10 seconds, and Savoir heaved a sigh of relief.

That's probably interference from the Minovsky Particles! Someone must have scattered the particles around this region to jam the electric waves as it expand, but the interference this time is really big. For precaution's sake, Savoir did all sorts of mechanical tests, and checked the visuals of the surveillance cameras. There was nothing different from before other than the two blocks of rock moving behind the space colony and entering the blind spot of the camera.

However, Savoir didn't know that the Minovsky Particles interference for that moment was so strong that even the port radar that had shielding parts was covered. The two pieces of rock then used this moment to change directions, not being what Savoir expected.

The uneven rocky surfaces let out glows from the control boosters, and the two stone blocks were slowly approaching << Industrial 7>>. During the short amount of time while the boosters let out thrust, the stone blocks attained relative velocity to the rotational speed of the space colony, and they were stuck on a part

of the outer wall that had the 'Wheels' on it. Then, the thing that looked like a stone block from the outside seemed to explode like a balloon; and what appeared inside was obviously an artificial object.

The tea-brown body that was inorganic like rock had limbs that didn't seem to have anything to do with a solid object. Also, the eye-like visor that had the function of covering the sensor on the head made it seem like it's a mobile suit humanoid weapon, but there's a lot of characteristics that didn't fit it. It copied the traditional look of the Federation Army made mobile suits, but its head is so flat that it feels like it was hit, and it is only 12m tall, 2 sizes smaller than a standard mobile suit. The mechanical shoulders do not have any hands at the wrists, only wrists that were designed uniquely for this squarish unit. The advantage of this mobile suit is that it's very versatile in terms of use, as its arms can be used to holster weapons. Based on this, the state right now doesn't look very efficient.

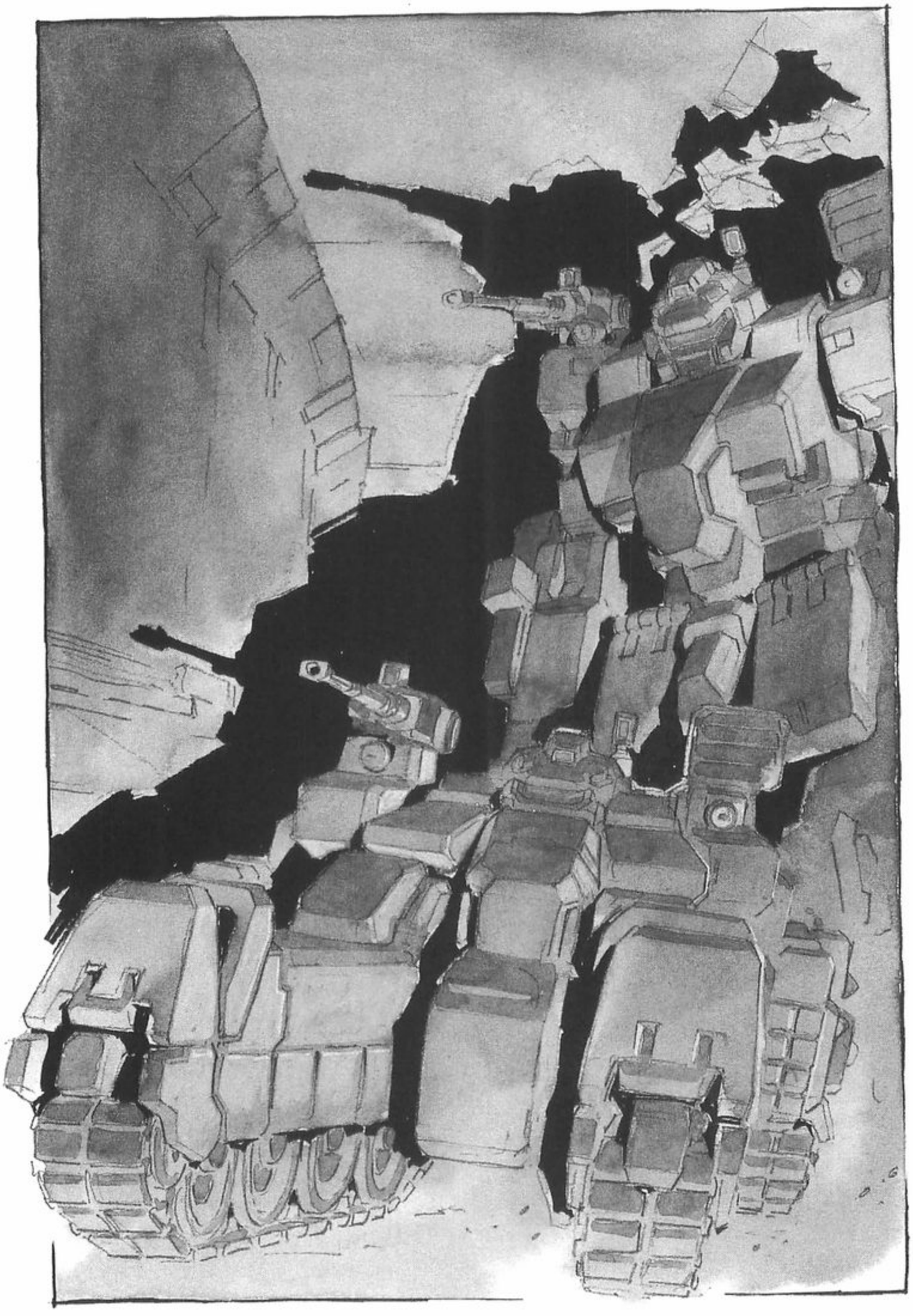
However, this is only one form of the D-50C <<Loto>> machines. The two <<Lotos>> removed their stone exterior—dummy balloons used for disguise, and got close to the space colony while being hidden in Minovsky's Particles, and the machines that were obviously much smaller than mobile suits were facing the outer walls of the 'Wheels'.

The stars in the background were moving relatively to the rotational speed of the colony, and the machines draw out the mechanical arms from under the wrists. The tip of the beam burners melt the outer wall of the 'Wheels'. Unlike a beam saber that's a concentrated form of beam, the beam burner shoots out

hi-energy mega-particles directly, causing the outer wall of the ' Wheels' to melt like butter. Less than several seconds later, more than 10m square of the outer wall is sliced off, and both <<Lotos>> manage to successfully enter the place. One machine enters, and the second machine goes into to weld the outer wall from the inside. This is to simply weld the important parts and not spend too much time when escaping.

There's no air filled in this outermost area of the 'Wheels' as the metallic frames were still being built. The ceiling is less than 10m tall, and the materials that were left aside were left behind the pillar, creating a view similar to the bottom of a ship or below a jumping board. As the <<Loto>> at the back is welding, the machine at the front sneaks into the narrow space, and ducks down as its feet touches the ground. It looks like it fell as it touched the ground because of gravity, but this is the correct operating process of this machine.

Just as its feet are about to touch the ground, the caterpillar units that are installed at the back are deployed; and the 2 set of crawlers that bore 4 wheels each bore the weight of the <<Loto>> unit as it land. Both legs then reached forward, and the thigh-equivalent parts were extended forward. The upper arms slide back, and the two wrist are attached to the left and right side of the machine, forming a machine with limbs all over the place.



The flattened head is half-entrenched back inside the body, and the six-wheeled crawlers that are equipped behind the thighs of the <<Loto>> land on the ground. The <<Loto>> that's not a humanoid shape but a tank now moves its four crawlers and went forward as a tank. The <<Loto>> behind it transforms into a tank too without waiting for its ally to move far, and men in normal suits came out from the troop transport room behind it. They then leave the machine under zero gravity and use the boosters to go all over the place before quickly starting on their designated missions.

The smart normal suits that look like they're for pilots to use have bulletproof vests with magazine pouches worn on the outside , and the holsters of the M-92F automatic pistol are attached onto their right legs. The arms and knees have hardened plastic guards, and there are recoilless rifles slung behind the shoulders. The men are all wearing this equipment, and didn't do any unnecessary movements. The boosters that have jet fire caps to reduce the lights are moving, and the profiles of the people wearing helmets can be seen landing on the ground, not minding the gravity on their bodies as they begin to deal with the access hatches on the wall and the ground. They have to restore the alarm mechanism as the outer wall was melted, set up a mechanism for them to maintain contact with each other even with the effects of Minovsky Particles , and establish connections to control systems that manages lifelines and safety system. The assignment is completed in less than one minute, and during this time, the <<Loto>> that's moving in front went down the split path and disappeared. In this faint passage with neither air nor sight of crowds, the rumbling of the caterpillars is slowly echoing as it moves further and further away.

The slight tremble echoed through the ground, causing the machine to jerk, and reach Commander Daguza Mackle in the control room. 45 seconds after the operation began, Daguza said ' we're through', and a short (Go) went through the wireless communication, letting Daguza know that the relay device is set up.

"Safety system."

(Go)

"Governor."

(Go)

After a hushed exchange, the fully-armored men end their work and return to the <<Loto>>. The last one moves through the back of the vehicle, and Daguza indicate the pilot sitting at the front to start moving. The Strategic Naval Research Institute—SNRI developed mini core reactor gives off power that won't lose to an ordinary reactor as it moves the 4 crawlers. Daguza's <<Loto>> jerked as it does not move down the path the front unit went through, but through the narrow hatch.

The small size of the reactor allows the machine to be smaller, but the <<Loto>> can carry quite a few people. As a transforming mobile suit, it also has to fulfill the specs of a transport carrier during special missions, so, needless to say, it holds a transport room that can hold 8 troops inside. The control room can also contain 3 people, the captain, the driver and the communication

personnel, and has the function of a command vehicle once it reaches a combat zone. On the screen at the captain's seat, Daguza summoned out the map of <<Industrial 7>>. The flatscreen image of the space colony has the link between the space colony and the ' Wheels' as the center, and through the light spots, they're able to tell where Team Alpha and Team Beta are at; allowing Daguza to realize how accurate the Inertia Navigation System (INS)—used to grasp locations through accelerations operation and time—is.

The operation has lasted for 1 hour and 40 minutes ever since they launched from the mothership <<Nahel Argama>>. There's no delay in their journey, but Daguza isn't taking any risks here. Earth, colonies, asteroids—to the members of ECOAS, special forces of the Earth Federation who believe in 'fighting no matter where the location is', invading colonies is just something normal for that. The problem is how to finish the mission without being seen. Daguza let the screen roll and focus on the stage of this battle . Down the inner wall of the 'Wheels', they will reach what's basically equivalent to a dock of Industrial 7, the colony builder << Magallanica>> that has a unique shape.

It's a large facility governed as a public colony, but in fact, it's the base of the Vist Foundation. That place has the target item, the <<Laplace Box>>. ECOAS' mission is to confirm its existence, prevent them from handing it over to the third party, and if possible, reclaim it. It's not stated, but Daguza knows that attached to the 'stop' word are the words 'at any costs', and 'reclaim' has the word 'secretly' attached to it. He knows this is a mission that the standard army can't do and a mission that ordinary people can 't see, and that's why the ECOAS are recruited. However, how much do their comrades on the command side know? They

investigated through the insides of the <<Magallanica>> and the security system, but they have no idea of what the most important 'box' contains. Even if they find it out, he doesn't know how to move it.

Thus, they have to confirm its existence. But with the involvement of the third party, the 'Sleeves', it can be said to be impossible for them to find this unidentified object. The success of this mission and the safety of the forces will all be in jeopardy unless they act 'at all costs'. Daguza realize that they're fighting with the savage title of manhunters, opened the visor of his helmet , pull the mask that was at his chin up to his nose before closing the visor.

Through the visor of the normal suit, what can be seen was only a cold expression. That nature of eliminating one's own identity is ECOAS' overall nature. In this get up, all members give up on their identities and become machines that will do their missions effectively, closing in on their targets silently and finishing the mission. They'll disguise the results as an accident. Every person exists, and yet doesn't, and are just a unit that form ECOAS.

They will eliminate the waste that's released from this huge organization called the Earth Federation without anyone knowing, clearing them without mercy. The way some forms of media portray them were right, but parts have no wishes, and won't have any expectations. As long as they're individuals or organizations, there'll be wastage when people live. This is something someone has to do—Daguza use this philosophy he adheres to in order to shake away the doubt in his mind and turned his sights back to the screen in front of him.

The two <<Lotos>> use the short layer under the ground of the colony to quickly move through at top speed and gradually close in at the entry point of the space builder. The time now is 5.06pm, and the <<Nahel Argama>> is about to take action. Daguza exhales as he watches the time tick by. The breath that's under the incombustible fabric mask brings about a presence of actual combat into the nose.

Part 3

(All personnel, get to type-2 alert. Mobile Suits are to get ready for launch. Release the airlocks. Pilots, back down.)

The audio broadcast rang through the fleet, and the mobile suit starboard 'AIR' red warning light was flashing. Riddhe Marcenas was checking that the two layers of his helmet were attached as he jumped into the cockpit of the 8th unit of the <<ReZEL>> .

The core reactor was starting to run. Once he turned on the full-screen mode, the screens on the inner wall of the ball-shaped cockpit were being activated one by one, showing all the 20m tall <<ReZELs>> that were around him. On this wide mobile suit deck, the <<Jesta>> painted with the serial number NA-J005 left the fixate and was moving towards the lift leading to the catapult. The mechanic holding the baton was floating in the air. The next machine that left the fixator was the 4th <<ReZEL>> unit . The warning light <<AIR>> was lighting, indicating that the catapult launch deck and the mobile suit deck's airlocks were opened, and air was drawn out. The sound of the mobile suit activation mechanism and the sounds of the alarm quickly vanished, leaving

only countless wireless sounds ringing in Riddhe's ears. The sortie team's preliminary checks, the signals on the bridge, the squad leader's instructions; he has to hear the necessary information from amidst the large amount of sounds and answer them all, and that's the job of a pilot.

(Romeo 001 notifying all units. Ian's squadron will launch after Norm's squadron. Once Norm's squadron enters the battle zone, we'll begin surveillance on Industrial 7. Norm's squadron will enter the standby area and provide cover for the assault squad and the fleet. The 'Sleeves' may have entered Industrial 7, so don't let your guard down thinking that we just need to protect ECOAS.)

As he carries out the checks as according to the textbook, the mobile suit squad leader, Lieutanant Commander Norm Basilicock was talking to everyone. Norm was the one in charge of leading all the mobile suits on the <<Nahel Argama>>, but for this launch, he 's leading a squadron, and the remaining forces are left for Commander Ian to command. Riddhe belongs to Ian's squad, and amongst them, there are 4 <<ReZEL> codenamed Romeo and two <<Jegans>> codenamed Juliet. The Norm's squad is positioned far away from the <<Nahel Argama>> to prevent any accidents.

Prevent accidents—contact with the 'Sleeves'. Riddhe thought for a moment and was about to stop his hand when the mechanical officer Jona Gibney suddenly barged into the cockpit cabin. Gibney ignored Riddhe, who's spaced out, leaned his body over, and asked, (Did you hear that?)

(It's the 2nd fleet's <<Clop>> that fought against the Sleeves. I heard 3 units were taken down.)

Both of them had their helmets sticking together to pass their words through vibrations. This 'intimate conversation' is very useful for those who don't want their conversations to be overheard through the wireless network. Riddhe forgets about the misfortune of seeing Gibney's bearded face up close and says in surprise, "Three?" He did hear of a battle happening near the shoal space region during the explanation just now, but he didn't hear the details. It's really a shocking thing to hear that three mobile suits were taken down.

(Really, what in the world are they doing in such a colony? Don 't damage the machine.)

Perhaps Gibney was able to see Riddhe's pale face through the visor as he deliberately uses a casual tone to say that, slaps Riddhe on the helmet, and leaves the cockpit. Riddhe instinctively closes the hatch, checking whether there's any problems with the air flow from the pump, and remembers his peer pilots that were also assigned to the <<Clop>>>.

He remembers that the <<Clop>> that's assigned to the second fleet of Londo Bell has 6 units. They might not be all taken down at the same time, but for 3 units to be taken down; *is it a large number of forces fighting, or did the 'Sleeves' have some ace pilot?* No matter what it is, it means that the enemy with such firepower may be hiding at Industrial 7, and the hunters are going to start something over there—

(Ensign Riddhe, do you copy me?)

This time, squad leader Norm's face appeared on the window. Riddhe hurriedly answered "Yes!"

(Never ever mention what you just heard. Forget about it.)

It's not a communication throughout the entire fleet, but a one-on-one conversation. This is forbidden in battle, but to the members of the <<Nahel Argama>>, Norm's words carry more weight than a textbook. Riddhe remembers the heavy atmosphere in the captain's room and the term 'Laplace's Box' that's full of mystery, before answering, "Yes, I understand."

(There're some things that are better for you not to know of. In your position, even if you don't want to hear it, you will one day hear the truth.)

"I don't want to walk down the path of politics…"

(I know, but it's the same no matter what you think.) Norm grimaces as he interrupts the sullen looking Riddhe, (Anyway, don 't get hurt in this stupid battle. I don't want to be watched by Senator Marcenas.)

Norm uses a normal captain's snark to end this and closes the communication screen. He probably doesn't want his subordinates to feel goosebumps in their hearts. Riddhe feels that on one hand, this man isn't to be underestimated, but on the other hand, he experiences the trustworthiness of this captain, and feels much more relaxed. But at the same time, he feels a strong sense of tension after thinking that anyone with such a mindset can die in a real battle, and his butt crack starts to tighten up.

After the preliminary order, it's finally Riddhe's turn, and he lets the <<ReZEL>> no. 8 come out from its fixtate. He follows the instructions of the mechanic waving the baton and takes the beam rifle from the armaments rack. This kind of basic action is already part of the computer process, so there's no need to operate it manually. The <<ReZEL>> grabs the beam rifle in a fluid motion that's like a human and heads to the lift. For every step it takes, the hooks at its feet will latch onto the barbs on the deck, and the tremors and sound of metal colliding with each other reaches the cockpit.

While moving up the lift, Riddhe starts to think of the 'home' that he left for a long time. *Does dad know about the <<Laplace Box>> that will end the Federation government when it's open?* He randomly thought, but feels that this is stupid and tries to get rid of the notion. At this point, the lift reached its destination, and Riddhe's ears hears the tense voice of a female (Romeo 008, please head to the 3rd catapult and launch after Juliet 4.) At a corner of the all-view monitor, in the communications screen that's 10cm wide, Mihiro Oiwakken's tense face was shown there.

It seems that it's not just the pilot who was feeling fear and thrill from being involved for the first time and facing a real battle, as even the operator is showing the same thing. *So the 'Mini-tank' can feel scared too,* Riddhe thought for a moment, and an unknown impulse appeared in his mind. Riddhe doesn't think too much into this as he says,

"Understood…Ensign Mihiro. Do you want to go catch a movie with me once we disembark?"

(Juliet 4, path's clear. Please launch.) Following Mihiro's uninterruptable voice, the <<Jegan>> that's codenamed Juliet 4 launches, and the light green humanoid-shaped machine sides down the catapult. *Did she not hear it, or did she ignore it?* Feeling awkward, Riddhe lets the feet of the <<ReZEL>> latch onto the catapult that's bounced back. He watches the mechanic wave the baton beside his feet, and the sight of outer space on the other side of the catapult enters his eyes. Mihiro suddenly brings her face closer to the communications window and whispers (You're the third person to invite me out.) "Is that so?" Riddhe asks as he checks whether the lights on his individual circuit is on.

(This is the first time I'm being so popular. Do guys like to invite people out in such crazy moments?)

"Ahh…maybe. Just want to have something on my mind."

Riddhe realizes that he was being too honest once he saw Mihiro cringe her chin back angrily, but it was too late. The lights on the individual circuit vanishes, and Mihiro reverts back to being an emotionless operator as it seems impossible to ask her out . *Doesn't actually matter;* Riddhe feels really sorry as he says it to himself in his heart. She's not used to this kind of thing, and if she can just easily say 'okay', guys will definitely fly out happily.

(Romeo 008, equipping catapult. Launch preparation complete.)

Mihiro says with a completely unrestrained voice. Riddhe half-reluctantly grabs onto the control stick, and then hears a

whisper (I don't like horror movies.) Unable to realize in time that she may have said this to everyone, Riddhe shouted in his heart ' got it', and his voice is so energetic that it's really awkward,

"RIDDHE MARCENAS, ROMEO 008, LAUNCHING!"

The countdown beside the catapult shows 0 and the operator lets out the launch signal. The cable-powered catapult is shot out, and immediately, 5G's worth of gravity is pressing down on Riddhe.

The <<Nahel Argama>>, which looks like a large wooden horse , has an opened-air deck on the right foreleg—and both top and bottom sides can be used as runways in zero gravity. The << ReZEL>> rides on the catapult and glides down. Once it reaches the launching point of the catapult, it stamps hard and leaps into the vacuum like a snowboard jump.

The relative velocity of the catapult launch and the machine's own thrust out increases as compared to the mothership. Riddhe sees from the corner of the all-view monitor that the <<Nahel Argama>> is moving further and further away, and checks whether the laser signal is working. The laser signal can tell the ship its position and allows for coordination in the bridge. It's the only lifeline with Minovsky Particles all over the place. Without this, he will get lost in the wide outer space, and even shot by friendly fire. So no matter what, he has to check the laser signal. The training tells him that he can leave everything aside once he checks the air flow in the machine and his allies' positions. In this outer space where radar can't be used, what awaits one who loses communication will be a slow and drifting death.

The instructors who have been flying before the One Year War started, in the era of radar, would often remind them about this, but to the current generation that includes Riddhe, that's not even a form of teaching, just common knowledge. To the pilots who're learning how to fly in the sea of Minovsky particles, it's a given premise that they can't use radar, and it's as simple as not being able to breath in vacuum. Riddhe finishes his checking on the laser signal before the acceleration ends, checks the positions of his allies, and then lets the machine transform. The head of the << ReZEL>> tucks in like a turtle, and the part that forms the chest is elevated together with the cockpit. The two arms are bent inwards, and the feet at the base are spread aside, keeping the parts above the knees on both sides. The shield that's equipped on the left wrist covers the head and two wrists, forming the lower body of the machine and making the <<ReZEL>> a non-human machine. It transforms into a space fighter jet that has the thruster group moved from the back to the back, the ones at the feet becoming the main thrusters—the 'aircraft' called Waverider.

The transformation merely took 0.5 seconds, and this kind of transformable mobile suit can only be made through a malleable mobile structure that can form a mobile suit's frame and a light but strong gundarium alloy. It has a complicated transformation frame , so the costs of making it are high, and it's a lot more complicated to assemble it. However, its high mobility and wide use of being a transport plane that can carry out long-range attacks are enough to make up for its flaws. The thrusters are all focused in a single direction because of the transformation, and the <<ReZEL>> gets thrust that's far more than its own mass requires, which allows it to move other mobile suits too.

Once the transformation is complete, Riddhe moves the control stick to the left. He sees the <<Jegan>> no.5 quickly catch up after the <<ReZEL>> no.8 launched. The laser signals react for both parties to reach relative velocity. Doing a motion they've practiced hundreds of times, the arms of the <<Jegan>> grabs onto the hook on the <<ReZEL>>'s thrusters. At the same time, the interaction channel is online, and a coarse voice came through the wireless radio, (So my limousine's driving by the young lord." It's the pilot of the <<Jegan>> no.5, Juliet 5.

"Yeah, where are we going, dear guest?"

(Drive me to the gathering point of those 'Sleeves', and remember to drive safely.)

Riddhe steps on the gas without hearing him complete the sentence, and the thrusters let out white and hot glows. The machine frames of the <<ReZEL>> and the <<Jegan>> that looks like it's grabbing onto a beatboard accelerate (You got nerve…! I'm going to lodge a complaint to your dad!) Riddhe hears the scream from the wireless radio cheerily and gives a smile. *I should be able to do this,* he thought. He feels a lot more relaxed, and his body does the motions he was trained to do. *Even if we're starting a real fight, I can tackle this fearlessly. I have self-confidence, and for this, I paid double the effort anyone else made. I'm a real pilot.*

The feeling of acceleration when the <<ReZEL>> transforms into the Waverrider state is different from the mobile suit state. It's like he became a bullet and flew in a straight line, and it makes him feel like how he always stated his dream of becoming a pilot

when he's young. Riddhe lets the machine turn and join Ian's squad. With squad leader Ian leading, 2 of the 4 waverride-state < <ReZELs>> are transporting <<Jegans>>. This looks just like a flying formation. *It's this*...just when Riddhe's feeling intoxicated by this feeling, he remembers that the biplane model is still in the cockpit, and frowns.

He wanted to take it to his room before launching, but forgot. He wrapped it up in a plastic bag, but it might be damaged if he accelerates too much. Riddhe looks over at where he left the model , and mutters 'forget it'.

I'll just check it when I go back. It's the same with the date with Mihiro, the more things I have to do once I get back to the ship, the better. Riddhe feels relaxed that he can still think about this, and focuses on maintaining formation.

In front of him is the shoal space region with countless blocks of remnants and stone. As he looks at the most up-to-date version map of space, the Ian's squad dodges the obstacles and head to the standby area. The battlefield, <<Industrial 7>>, can't be identified through the countless space dust.

Chapter 3

Part 1

In the quiet room, the old pillar clock is rocking away. It's a wooden pillar clock that seems to be made in the old centuries.

It's 6pm. GONG GONG. The time's being reported as the sound echoes throughout the hall, and the girl—or rather, Audrey Burne—heads to the window and sees the outside scenery through the glass window. The panel-styled artificial sun has darkened, and the surrounding area is covered in darkness. The outdoor lights that's set in the courtyard lets out a weak light, and though it attracts a lot of flies, it can't shine into the large garden. She feels like she's looking into outer space that has very little light.

The forest on the outside is also submerged in darkness, and it looks like a black block that is differently darkened. The rows of trees that aren't rustling with the wind remain silent and still in the darkness, and it looks extremely unique. This looks like a natural environment, so the unnaturalness of the air-tight space where wind won't blow becomes all the more obvious. The lights of the streets, the rumbling of the vehicles, the noise brought about by people living…these things makes the colony feel like an artificial earth, so once the space colony lacks such things, it'll become an ordinary indoor scene again. Feeling really hurt, Audrey turns her eyes back into the room.

There is an old-styled wardrobe, an attached mirror, a twin-sized canopy bed; a tea table that can be brought to the

balcony, plates that have a red tea teapot and cookies on them, and earthenware that's reflecting soft light. This seem to be a room prepared for female guests, and the windows and lighting inside the room have a luxurious color base, so one won't feel sick of looking at them for a long time. The room properly wasn't used for many years, but it's kept so tidy that it didn't give that feeling. As expected of a mansion belonging to the Vist Foundation. Also, a servant just came by and let her enjoy a mini-dinner.

She, who has eaten the 'real' stuff ever since young, knew clearly that it wasn't some packaged food. It must be some servant who's often in this mansion or Cardeas' personal chef who prepared this food. She wondered whether the food might be spiked, but after thinking that there's no need to do this to a bird in a cage, Audrey enjoyed this meal. In the end, her filled stomach caused her body to slow down, and let her have the urge to lie down on the bed. It's either that Vist Foundation's reception was perfect or that she was being too crude.

It's been more than 2 hours since she was brought to such a comfy room where she didn't feel like she was watched. She has achieved the aim of meeting the person she has to meet and saying what she has to say, but what's next? Cardeas merely listened silently and didn't give a clear answer. Zinnerman and Marida's movements were unknown, but since they know that she made contact with Vist Foundation, they will carry out the deal secretly. They will probably let the mobile suits remain on standby after considering that she's a hostage.

If such sparks fly because of this, Cardeas will have to take her as a hostage. She feels that she has to leave this house and go back

to the <<Garencieres>> on her own first, but she can't go back without understanding Cardeas' intent. If the deal is made peacefully, there will be no meaning to why she came here. Also, Audrey now has no self-confidence of being able to move through this residential area that's surrounded by the dark forest, back to the port on the back of the colony.

From what she heard of Cardeas, Audrey believes that he's someone she can recklessly get to approach and talk to, but she didn't consider about what happens next. It was merely an excuse on Audrey's part to say that there wasn't much time, and she sighs and sits down on the chair. She drinks up the cold red tea and looks up at the painting. The background of the painting looks to be a mountainous region on Earth, and there are several herded sheep and a shepherd boy facing the front, not smiling at all.

The boy's straightforward expression shows the labor of hard work, and also shows the wide world. Audrey suddenly remembers the name Banagher Links, and her heart aches. He wasn't someone of the opposite gender Audrey likes, and she can't even remember his face clearly, as only the touch of the hand remain etched on her skin. It's not that he came because of a righteous cause or loyalty, but because of emotions. The owner of that hand seems to resemble the shepherd boy in this painting. That seemingly obedient yet continues-to-chase kind of expression —

"It's fine no matter who you are. Just say that you need me."

The voice that was left beside her cut through the silence in the room and entered her heart. What was he saying? Audrey only felt

surprised now, and grimaced slightly. It's too reckless for someone she didn't know for very long or even the background to say something like that, but for that moment, Banagher's eyes were serious. His eyes look like they were yearning for something, just like the picture of the boy. If she didn't deliberately say that she wanted to draw a line, she might be attracted by the light in his eyes. What happened to him after that? Did he go back to school safely?"

"Do I…need him?"

If that hand was pulling her, she would immediately leave this place. As Audrey harbored such a random thought, the bell rang, and it shocked Audrey.

She hurriedly sat properly and said 'please enter'. She thought that it was an attendant who came to collect the tea set, but the one standing outside the wooden door was Cardeas Vist. Audrey feels that her skin is tensing up because of the anxiety, and got up to invite the leader of Vist Foundation in.

Cardeas, who said 'excuse me' as he entered the room, looked at the table. This is to see whether the guest is unsatisfied with the reception, and Audrey, who went through the same training, understood that. Before coming in, he must have talked to the servants and understood what meals she had. Audrey first spoke up, saying, "It's nice." This is an instinctive action she does based on etiquette and dignity, and Cardeas, who's showing a smile as he said 'it's fine as long as it suits your tastes', didn't do anything else. He's like a brave eagle tilting its head slightly, showing a smile that makes people drop their guards.

"I've changed the meeting point with your allies to this << Magallanica>>."

Cardeas prompted Audrey to sit down, and he sat opposite her. He put the notepad PC in his hand onto the table, and says, "They' ll be here soon. Once the job's done, I'll let you two meet, so please wait."

This was basically declaring that he has no intention of ending this deal. Though she already predicted it, she couldn't hide her disappointment once it became reality. "Can you please reconsider ?" Cardeas could only remain silent as he watched Audrey clasping her hands tightly under the table and having her voice tremble.

"Why? I heard that the 'Laplace Box' is the lifeline that gave the Vist Foundation its power, but handing such a thing over to us…"

"That's because even if our fortune and prosperity continues on, we won't be able to salvage the world when it becomes inapt completely."

This was something she didn't expect at all. Audrey repeated Cardeas words again as she saw his unwavering vision, "World, inapt…?"

"Peace and stability aren't good for keeping. It will immediately become inapt if we don't introduce some fresh air."

"Are you saying that war can make the world evolve?"

Cardeas' eyes twitched, and the smiled disappeared from his face. It seemed that these words were for real, and Audrey, whose head went hot from understanding this, stared at Cardeas' face and says,

"I was born in a war, watched people grow up in a war, and watched many soldiers die to protect me."

Cardeas looked down slightly and said calmly, "I suppose." That heavy voice seemed like it could only resonate with such people, and seemed to be a form of sympathy to her. Audrey felt her mood worsening, but still finished off what she had to say,

"…It was really tragic. What's born from this expectation is the arrogance of those who're engrossed with peace."

"Then, are you denying your own organization?"

"I'm not denying it, but Full Frontal is a dangerous man. If you hand him the 'Laplace Box', a lot of people will die."

"Full Frontal. The man hailed as the second coming of the one they call the Red Comet…Char Aznable."

Audrey knew that her eyes were showing a shaken belief, and she wanted to argue back, but couldn't say anything, and lowered her head. Cardeas slowly got up and walked over to the window facing the dark courtyard.

"Without his existence, the 'Sleeves' will never become an organization with a military group's standard. That's something you can't do."

"I'll admit that…"

She didn't think that expanding rapidly as a military organization is the best method. Even if they want to change the current situation, there has to be a change in methods. Audrey wanted to say something, but that was all she could, and this self-realization made her unable to say it out. She understands very well how ironic it will be for her to argue against war and militarism from her own standpoint. However, this isn't important . What she is trying to say is that the current direction they're headed to is very dangerous, but she can't explain what's dangerous about it. She has to clearly explain her instincts or feelings, but can't do so. This anxiety and helplessness continued to swirl in her, causing her to only sit here and tremble. If there is anything unnecessary for her to say, if there's some way she can let others know of what she thought of—

"You're a smart person, and you have your responsibilities that comes with your position, but you're still too young. I understand your feelings, but you won't be able to convince people like this until you become a real Newtype."

After a short moment of silence, Cardeas said this. However, Audrey was paying more attention to the word 'Newtype' than the admonition. She lifted her head and looked at Cardeas.

"Do you believe? That…"

"It's a must to continue believing, but sometimes, blood may have to be shed for the hope to continue."

Cardeas looked back at her and answered, and there was a faint glint in his shape eyes. Audrey's intuition was telling him that this guy was deliberately doing this.

Cardeas wasn't looking at what he will gain or lose immediately, but was taking action while looking at something much bigger. He believed that there was something he couldn't see and intended to open the 'box' which was a taboo. Audrey felt much more relieved than feel unhappy about this understanding. She even felt that it was worth it coming here to see this expression .

"Please go back. If the person who accepts this 'box' is just like what you imagine, the 'box' will never be opened."

"…What do you mean?"

"Because I did something. That's a fierce horse."

Smirking, Cardeas did some simple operations on the notepad PC and turned the screen over. Audrey couldn't help but gasp as she saw what was shown on it.

"This is…"

"The path to the 'box', or rather, the 'key'…"

Cardeas then showed several photos and spoke. Audrey then realized now that the color of his eyes were similar to the shepherd boy in the painting.

Part 2

"Hey, you're Banagher, right? Banagher Links."

The girl who brought her face over without restraint has the smell of alcohol coming out from her mouth. Banagher realizes that his face is becoming stiff, but answers softly, "That's me."

"I heard what you did this morning. You stole a mini mobile suit and crashed into the park, right? That's amazing. Tell me what you feel."

Having a blurry looking expression, the girl puts her hand on Banagher's thigh as he sits down on the sofa, and leans her exposed shoulders over. One can see the cleavage from the vest, but Banagher doesn't feel anything special about it. The most he just feels is that he accidentally saw some skin that has spots on them, and feel that it's not very clean to look at it closely. Banagher takes a gulp of cola from the glass and adjusts his sitting position, "Nothing…much to talk about." And answers without looking back. "Uwa—wow, that's so cool!" The girl's scream matches the high decibels that fill the wide living room, piercing the ears.

"You're not an obedient kid, but trying to act cool."

"What is it, Asta? Have you become friends with him?"

The red-haired girl, who's swaying her hips to the beat of the music, walks towards the girl called Asta and Banagher beside her before sitting down on the other side of Banagher. The recoil causes some of the cola to spill out, but the red-haired girl doesn't seem to mind as she looks at Banagher with a gauging look. Banagher, who's being sandwiched between the two girls, cringe back and drinks up the cola he doesn't want to drink. He just feels distant. He, who's being surrounded by the flushed-red girls, the heat that's sticking onto his arms, the fast-paced music, the noise that's piling in this void, and the stuffiness in the crowd, can only spend his time here slowly—

There are about 10 boys and girls making noise in front of them, dancing with the music and drinking alcoholic drinks. It's just beer or whiskey-tinged cola, but it's enough to make these teenage youths drunk. It seems that some people are using some legal drugs, as he can see a blond person's eyes looking rather weird at the kitchen counter. The people gathering at the balcony are smoking, and the room with the door tightly shut is letting smoke through. It smells greasier than cigarettes, and it's most likely marijuana.

It's rumored that the people in private schools normally behave well, but go ridiculously wild once they get started; from the looks of it, this really is the case. If the owners of this house, Micott's parents see such a devastating scene, they will definitely roll blank white eyes; but luckily, they're on a vacation with their young son. That's when everyone held their breaths and watched Micott from behind when her parents called.

The Minovsky Particles interference today is rather serious, and the communication with their destination was immediately cut off. However, Micott, who calmly states that everything's fine at home, doesn't show any signs of being troubled. As everyone saw her stick her tongue out once she put down the phone and accepted everyone's cheers, one will doubt whether she's such a frivolous girl who's already used to do such things. Her father's a respected factory head, and the girl herself is a carefree person who would enter the technical school without hesitation. From that moment on , Banagher started to view her as a different creature altogether. Takuya, who's used to the current atmosphere and dancing around foolishly in the family bar with 2, 3 girls, looks like one of those irritating things that are gathered in this room.

This isn't the first time Banagher's taking part in such an event. In the vocational school hostel where he stays, it's commonplace to get someone to open a room and have some sort of party gathering . Even if he can't mix in fully like Takuya, Banagher believes that he can mix himself into the surrounding atmosphere like usual. It's not because these are strangers from a private school; and it's not just this party alone, as he can get himself involved in daily life before yesterday. However, the time now looks rather faded. He just feels that the gears that were spinning well even though they don't actually fit have stopped completely today, being completely loose. It's this kind of things that made Banagher anxious, frustrated. He shouldn't be blaming this on the people around him—Banagher hasn't lost such rationality yet.

That's why he set up an invisible wall and treats himself as a flower wall, but these brains that are intoxicated and relaxed by

alcohol don't seem to understand his intent. Banagher starts to feel that the pressure that's building up in his heart continues to rise like a storm beating away and the uncomfortable body temperature surrounding him. *I shouldn't be here.* A part of him is prompting him to hurry up and leave, and another part of him is warning him that it'll be a path of no return if he really leaves. In the end, he's only left with self-chiding in his heart, wondering why must he curl his tail and run off?

Will I wreck my future? Is it because of that 'no need'? I don't have any clear target to my own future, and I know that I don't have any power that makes people want me. My deceit made her say such things—

"You're rather famous in our school! I heard that there's a rather cute boy at the technical school."

The girl who finally squeezes in and looks at Banagher's eyes before talking. The eyes that are wet because of alcohol are so limp that one will wonder if she'll collapse with just a simple poke. Banagher remembers those adamant jade-colored eyes, and feels that both of them don't have the expressions of a human. However , he just feels unhappy about this feeling and remains silent.

"You're a transfer student, right? Which colony were you at before this?"

The girl called Asta brings her hand with the bracelet and puts it on Banagher's thigh. Banagher smells her breath that reeks of pizza and beer, and tells himself and this is daily life. It's a good thing that he's famous in a private school. *Let's just chit-chat with them at a suitable level, and get along with them while our student lives aren't lacking; and once we played enough, we'll be treated as treasure and become members of the thousands of Anaheim Electronics workers. This is the future you fear will be wrecked.*

He remembers his hometown. The people who took the wrong path all ended up like that. *Didn't mum always say this? She wants me to become an adult who understands how great an ordinary life is*— but with these words that continue to surge in his heart, Banagher refuted it. *Whenever mom teaches me such thing, I just feel like something's 'missing'.* It's like his eyes were being shrouded, and something's being taken away from me. And today, that blindfold seems to slip. That's why he immediately saw a world he never saw before for an instant, a world where he didn't feel 'out of place '. The determined jade-colored eyes, the unicorn tapestry, and the mobile suit with the unicorn horn.

He started to feel difficulty in breathing. I can't breathe if I continue to remain here; let's go back. Where can I go breath? Where's your resting place? This voice rang with the deep beats and the girls' squeals overlap each other "Don't be so quiet. Talk a bit." "Ah, do you have a girlfriend?" Amazing, you're really steady~" "Oi, Asta. His glass' empty. Pour some out for him."…

"DON'T BOTHER ME!!!"

The suffocating fear immediately exploded into high decibels. As he stood up, Asta, who was about to pour beer, was knocked aside, and the bottle hit a corner of the table and shattered. The two girls scream, and it's only a matter of time before all the gazes are focused on Banagher.

It's unknown which idiot helped to turn off the music and cause the atmosphere in the living room to be so bad that it can't be salvaged. Asta starts to cry, and the other girl stares at Banagher with a cold expression before saying, "What's with this guy…" Other voices then pop out, "Who's that guy?" "Feels bad." Banagher sees a few boys looking dangerously at him and lowers his head to look at Asta. He wants to apologize to her, but after seeing that she's crying like a kid instead of clearing the shattered bottle, he feels that it's stupid to feel sorry. *Cry all you want*, he thought.

"That's why I say don't invite the people from the vocation school."

Someone said that. Banagher pretends not to hear it, but a threatening voice came from the family bar, "Ahh? Who said that!? " With his back facing the girls that got up in fear, Takuya glares at everyone from the bar counter.

"Oi, Banagher! Hurry up and apologize!"

In this atmosphere that's becoming even more heinous, Micott moves through the human wall and calls out. She doesn't bother to care about what other people are doing as she merely cares about the stares. After hearing that voice, Banagher's final sanity is gone, and leaves the scene wordlessly.

"Oi, Banagher!" Takuya calls him, but he ignores it and leaves the living room. Micott's house include the two highest levels of the tower, and by climbing up the indoor stairs, one will reach the garden on the roof. The reason why Banagher climbed the stairs and head to the roof is merely because the stairs are nearer than the entrance. Anyway, he has a need to get out and bring in some fresh air to his blocked lungs.

The mansion is owned by Anaheim Electronics, built from the pillars supporting the artificial sun. The construct feels like litter stuck at the base when compared to the huge pillars that reach the artificial sun, but the building's 10 levels high, and the unique thing is that the gravity will be lower the higher up one goes. It's hard to tell the difference when the living room's at the 9th level, but the gravity at the roof is lower when the 10th level itself is close to 0.9G.

Whether low gravity can prevent aging and keep people healthy is real or not, nobody knows, but mansions that are built to cater the rich families will be of different standards at different levels. Micott's house is no exception as the level with low gravity has a bedroom and a gym, but this is the best playpark for drunk people. Banagher hurries up the room as he glances at the youths making a ruckus in the gym. On the way there, he suddenly starts

to wonder about the situation outside, and looks at the ground from the window at the stairs.

Just as he thought, the limo-type high class electric door is parked outside the entrance of the mansion. This Vist Foundation limo has leather seats, high-class audio speakers, fridge, and even iced grape wine, and remains near there like a bodyguard after sending him from the 'Snail' to the technical school, which makes it look annoying. It's low gravity, but Banagher feels his mood become heavy as he clicks his tongue before leaving the window.

The chairman instructed us to ensure your safety. As he sat on the limo, two suit-clad men that gives the strong vibe and disciplined hunters wouldn't accept any other logic. Even if he tell them that they're irritating and to just send me back, they won't take action without their owner's command. Cardeas Vist, that authority of this distinguished adult wraps around me like air. The moment he thought that he couldn't escape the man's grasp, Banagher just feels that it was harder to breath and takes 3 steps up the stairs like they're two steps. The couple that are hugging at the stairs near the roof seem to be grumbling in their hearts that he's being a spoilsport.

"Fuu—n, so these people are watching."

Through the handrail gap, Micott looks down at the limo downstairs and said. Her back profile is saying that she knew what was going on, but she hasn't forgiven Banagher, who puts his hands in his coat pocket and grumbled,

"They're looking for trouble, sending such an obvious looking car like that!"

He puffed his mouth as he said that, and then turn his eyes to the artificial sun pillar that's standing behind it. At the center of the room, the 3km pillar that passes through the clouds enter the darkness midway through and become a shadow blocking the starry sky. Of course, those aren't real stars, but a starry sky created from the lights on the inner wall on the other side.

The pillars are all set at regular points all over the inner wall, supporting the artificial sun that stretches out long—no, the artificial sun pillar is located in the center axis in a zero-gravity area, and so it should be more correct to say that it's fastened. The roof of the building is latched onto the base like an annual ring, and each area separated by shrubs, allowing people to do whatever they insist to do. For Micott's house, a half is used as a swimming pool, while the other half is used as a family garden.

In this place that looks like a corner of the roof with the annual ring being sliced open, Micott and Takuya have been talking to him for more than 10 minutes. Thinking about this closely, there's a lot of things he couldn't say easily, but he can't try to sugarcoat things when both of them are angry. Banagher can only tell the truth. It's better to say out what's in the heart; as he faces the duo who left the party midway to look at him, the inner pressure that's almost about to blow his heart out is quietened down. He remembers the girl called Asta, and starts to feel sorry for her. In that end, that's all I'm worrying about. Thinking about this, what happened for the entire day suddenly starts to feel less realistic, and what's left is an emptiness that pierces through the hand.

"But that's great. Chairman Cardeas is a big shot in the financial world. What kind of person is he?"

But Takuya's words sound like he doesn't care at all, causing Banagher to feel unhappy and think that he hasn't understood the situation at all "Nothing much. Just an ordinary adult. Just looks impressive." Banagher said with a stiff voice, "Un, that's not just an ordinary impressiveness." Takuya yawns.

"But because of this, you left that girl called Audrey, so you can only admit defeat."

That's some vexing feeling in Micott's words, causing Banagher to gasp "What, wha…" and try to found a voice out. Micott let go of the handrail and turns around.

"Being all fidgety and even taking your anger on my friend, that's not manly at all. If you're so worried, go snatch her back, idiot."

Banagher can't think of anything to retort back, and Micott walks towards the stairs without waiting for his reaction. Banagher's mind immediately thinks that all the girls will think this way, but still spoke up "Since when is it that simple!" The empty protest bounces off Micott's back and lands on the surface of the swimming pool before scattering.

"Don't be mad. She's just being jealous."

As he watches Micott pass through the stairwell doors , Takuya spoke up. On hearing such unexpected words, Banagher asks “Ha? What do you mean?”

“You’re way too slow. Never mind, don’t bother. It’s not that simple anyway.”

“What?”

“You might be expelled. Micott’s the daughter of a factory manager. Looking at her like this, she might not have suffered much, unlike us.”

Takuya gave a loud hiccup as he says that. The alcohol’s making his face red, but his eyes look more awake than usual.

“Once we hang on until graduation, we’ll become official members of Anaheim. This is the one good chance for people like us. Don’t ruin this just because you’re mad.”

Takuya’s tea-colored hair that’s swaying with the slightly warm wind, and the side of his face seem to be looking at the night scene of the colony as he says this. At this moment, *Ah, this guy’s already an adult,* Banagher suddenly feels this way and can’t say anything. he feels that between him and Takuya, there’s a wall that’s more thorough from a certain angle as compared to the one with Micott, and feels that the world around him is leaving him.

This is the familiar feeling he forgot once he met Audrey Burne—the ‘shifted’ feeling. Banagher feels pain in the chest and

breathing difficulties. He turns his eyes away from Takuya's side face, leans on the handrail, and looks up at the geometry patterns painted by the street lights and electric cars. The Foundation's limo is still at the same spot, just as what he saw just now.

Banagher grabs onto the handrail tightly and looks up behind the large pillar, the airtight wall on the side facing the moon. The expansion works during the day cause the airtight wall to become further, and it's impossible to see the gate leading to the 'snail' as it seem to be covered by the thick atmosphere and clouds.

Part 3

It's 7pm, and the people being expected appeared.

"Welcome to the <<Magallanica>>. I'm the leader of the Vist Foudnation, Cardeas Vist."

The gang of people who went down the lift probably didn't expect the leader to personally come out and invite them. Everyone gasp, but Cardeas notices that amongst the 4 people, the bearded man is the only one who recovers faster from the shock as he looks around to grasp the current situation.

Is this man the captain, the brain behind these movers the ' Sleeves' sent? Just as he's trying to confirm this, the mouth that's covered with beard starts to move, "I'm the captain of the << Garencieres>>, Suberoa Zinnerman." And reaches out his hand with the joints looking very obvious. Cardeas holds his hand too, and clearly concludes that this is either the hand of a thoroughly trained soldier or someone who's been through a long prison life.

"We're really awed that the leader himself will come to invite us."

"This is the fate of handing over our Foundation. We can't just leave this to anyone else."

As they exchange looks with each other and started talking, Zinnermans takes out a hand-written letter from his old leather coat pocket. After seeing that it has the signatures of Monaghan Baharo and Full Frontal, Cardeas looks over at the three men accompanying Zinnerman, and asks, "Is everyone here?" Zinnerman's eyebrows never twitch as he says,

"Some are still on the ship, so if you want a list…"

"No, there's no need." There was no response about anything regarding 'her', and Cardeas' first impression is that he's not an easy man to deal with as he hands the handwritten letter over to Gael and smiles at them, "Please, allow me to lead the way in." and leads them down the long corridor.

The office building that's located in the rotating residential area of the <<Magallanica>> has a centrifuge force for easy walking. The room that looks undecorated like an office is like a completely different world as compared to the Vist's villa that's also indoors. However, there's nothing to be picky about in terms of safety procedures. Even though they will have to carry out many checks here, the other party's the elites sent over by the 'Sleeves'. Cardeas doesn't even want to accommodate them and rest in the villa.

Because of 'her', they're all being suspicious of each other. That' s why Cardeas change the location to ensure safety. He looks at Gael, who's following him from behind, and whispers in a volume only they can hear, "How's the port?" Gael's large body immediately catches up and whispers back, "No problems."

"The people outside the ship have returned back. I don't know what's the situation inside the ship, but it seems that they're waiting on standby just in case."

This is the report made by the contacts watching the << Garencieres>>. The people who got off the ship to look for 'her' are now back on…in other words, Zinnerman believes that 'she's here. The one on standby to prepare for anything is likely the mobile suit that buried the Londo Bell patrol squad. Cardeas, who was intending to look at the other party's attitude before deciding when to return 'her', focuses on Zinnerman and company behind him. At this moment, Gael suddenly asks, "Do we recall the guards watching over that kid?" and this question caused Cardeas to be unable to react for a while.

Since the 'Sleeves' pursuers have returned to the ship, there's no need to send anyone to protect Banagher Links. "Just wait a while, nobody can ensure that there aren't any other threats in the colony. " Gael hears this and wordlessly nods his bald head. Cardeas recalls the face of the boy he just had a glimpse of a few hours ago.

He laughed at himself before, thinking that they will meet one day, but delayed on because of work, and today, that face appeared right in front of him—that face is a lot more mature than

how it look in the photo; Cardeas laughed wryly in his heart. He's probably being hated for being able to say such rigid things. This is the carelessness of men. No matter how much experience they gain or no matter how powerful they become, they will become weak at that moment. It feels like the expression that was close to him saw through everything, and he was scared…

The office corridor that's cleared out is so quiet that only a few people's footsteps can be heard. As they go through this short time that's starting to decide on the fate of the organization, Cardeas continues to face the tumor in his life.

Part 4

It's 7.04pm. The electronic interference brought about by the Minovsky particles is becoming stronger, and even the physical sensors are having interference. Savoir has been going through countless reset operations while hiding in the cockpit of the << Geara Zulu>> that's hidden behind the solar panel.

Even after rebooting the system, the physical sensors haven't recovered at all. Savoir stares at the screen that's full of noise and forcefully slams the console on the linear seat. This is just a simple electronic interference, yet it's causing the physical sensors to malfunction. Something has to be wrong here. For sensors, even if the Minovsky Particles are thick enough for combat levels, it can still detect a radius of 20km. In this outer space, this distance can be closed in immediately, but it's still very important in such a surveillance mission. And the reason why it can't work is either the clouds of Minovsky particles were too thick or the sensor's protection malfunctioned.

"Really, it's because we're using cheap stuff…!"

It's impossible for the Minovsky particles density to increase so much that the sensors can malfunction unless someone deliberately scatters them. Savoir completely assumes the reason to be the latter and starts muttering to him. It's not complete, but the 'Sleeves' still have enough forces to be called an army, and can use such new mobile suits. However, there's a huge problem in terms of the funding. Most of their equipment are handed down from the old army, and the replacements aren't considered ample. It's a new machine, but the <<Geara Zulu>> still has a control panel in the form of the ball-shaped armlaycer, and this is to make use to the old-machine's OS. It's easy to let the hand slip off the controls, so criticism like this are the reason why the Federation army isn't using this anymore.

It's because of this situation that Vist Foundation's strange request brought about a glimmer of hope. Unexpectedly, just when the deal's about to begin, the sensor malfunctions. Savoir concentrates on the small camera image that's appearing on the left side. Right now, he can only rely on the visual information—his own eyes to witness this. through the all-view monitor, he's looking at the CG starry space that's a lot brighter than the actual one, and is about to take a sip off the packet-tubed coffee when a white glow flashes past his eyes.

"A mini-mobile suit…no, that's not it."

For a mini mobile suit, the thrust light is way too great. Savoir steps onto the pedal lightly to investigate the rock that's glowing.

The mini camera capabilities can't allow it to observe, so it's faster to let the machine move forward slightly and use the main camera to look at it. Savoir cautiously moves the control panel, and lets the <<Geara Zulu>> that's hidden in the gap of the materials move to the protrusion of the solar panel. The head of the machine pokes out from the shadow of the solar panel, and immediately a large object flies past the head, and a siren rings throughout the cockpit.

"What…!?"

He immediately ducks his head and let the machine arm reach for the beam rifle that's hanging at the waist. A mobile suit with a thruster unit behind it flies above the <<Geara Zulu>>. The distance is less than 100m, and it seems to be in inertial flight mode as the thrusters aren't flashing. There's no need to use the CG to compare with the data as Savoir observes the intricate parts of the machine that just grazed past.

The beam rifle remains at the firing position, and the sky-blue object that seems to be moving slowly has a streamlined frame. It's the transformable mobile suit of the Earth Federation army. The comparison results show that it's the RGZ-95, and it's said to be an enemy machine assigned to Londo Bell—

"That close…!?"

His body is sweating all over, and his heart is beating faster. He's cursing his eyes for looking there as he watches the enemy machine approach with his pilot eyes. Savoir reaches for the communication controller. No matter how thick the Minovsky particles, it's possible to send voices within 20km. He has to report

back to the <<Garencieres>> before the enemy detects him, and he has to consider what to do next, whether to fight or run. However, his fingers freeze once he's about to touch the control.

Mobile suits that are shooting thruster lights one after another are floating near the rocks. They're appearing on the mini surveillance camera, and scattering in all directions to surround Industrial 7. There're 4 RGZ-95s and 2 RGM-89s; he can tell at first glance that there are 6 of them. Savoir sees one machine fly past the mini surveillance camera cable and parks itself above the << Geara Zulu>>. His heart then sinks.

"What's with these guys…"

It's definitely not a training drill. These mobile suits are slowly increasing the thickness of Minovsky particles and slipped in from behind the space dust. This must be a tactical action in battle—and it also seems like a squad's leading the forces to surround the colony in a large scale battle. If they're setting up so many units, it' s possible to imagine that the reinforcements are advancing, and there might even be a fleet on standby behind. There must be some definite information, some enemy must have definite basis over this information to mobilize such fighting force.

We've been had. Savoir firmly believes, but can't touch the control of the communication panel. He can't call out when there's a RGZ-95 beside him, separated only by a solar panel. The solar panel's microwaves and the Minovsky particles are able to hide the heat source of the <<Geara Zulu>>, but his existence will be discovered by the enemy once he does a wireless communication, and the source of the electric signal will be detected. No matter

how he tries to escape, he'll only become a martyr victim of the beam rifle.

Should I take action? The fingers that are on the sphere control are stiff. Savoir answers himself, *no, even if I take down this unit, other enemy units will spot me. This is just telling the enemy that the 'Sleeves' are in ambush, and the <<Garencieres>> will be in danger.* Even if he contacts them, it'll be meaningless if he can't escape.

What should I do? Just when he's repeating the same words in his mind, Savoir instinctively ducks as the enemy unit flies above him. The finger that's on the ball control exerts force, and the machine arm of the <<Geara Zulu>> jerks as the finger is holding onto the beam rifle's trigger. Most likely, the toe end of the enemy unit hit a cable of the mini surveillance camera as static appears on the window.

Please don't find us. Savoir clasp his trembling hands and prays to the god he never believed in before.

Part 5

Marida senses Savoir's nervousness. More accurately, it's the familiar presence rising in the midst of the large number of people inside and outside the colony.

On the retaining deck of the <<Garencieres>>, the <<Kshatriya >> is fastened by the fixates. Marida hears Savoir's presence from through the thick armor, and at the same time, feels that the cold and shrilling pain of the countless thoughts close in. The psycommu that's installed on the machine increases the senses'

reaction. However, the chill that enters her pores are different from the signal feedback as they become even clearer, slithering in like countless snakes under the skin, forming a very uneasy feeling.

In that chilling uneasiness, she identifies the body warmth and knows where the fearful Savoir is. Marida takes off the helmet of the suit and expand her senses out. The complicated emotions that are released out and spreads throughout the space colony accepts the emotions that came rushing in from outside. The tightly shut eyes slowly open.

"The enemy's here…!"

This isn't an ambiguous feeling. Marida activates the reactor of the <<Kshatriya>> and grabs onto the ball-shaped control. The mono-eye of the <<Kshatriya>> lets out a glow, and the machine twitches slightly.

Part 6

"In other words, you're not handing us the <<Laplace Box>> itself, but the key to opening it?"

He has no intention of believing that lost expression on Zinnerman's face completely. Under that appearance of a thoroughly trained and gruff soldier, there's a calculative heart inside. Cardeas continues to drink the red tea that's mixed with brandy and answers, "Yes, are there anything you're unhappy with?" "It's more like I don't understand instead of being unhappy ." Zinnerman scratches his head, and his expression as he answers is one full of doubt.

"That's because we don't know what's this <<Laplace Box>>."

The one who spoke behind Zinnerman is a man with blond short hair, standing like a bodyguard. The man who calls himself Flaste Schole isn't sitting on the sofa as he gives a cautious look like the other two men. Of course, behind him, Cardeas has Gael and their subordinates watching all of Flaste's actions. The dangerous looking men are all separated by the table, and it's a guessing game being played in this reception room. Both of them are silent, not even looking at each other, and yet wary of each other's existence—

It's been 5 minutes as they meet in this plain reception room that didn't even have anything other than plants, not even a painting. This man called Zinnerman hasn't really spoken up, and his expression is wavering at times. Cardeas feels that he doesn't want to reveal his trumps in this situation. He wants to see what this hard-to-deal-with man is like, what his real 'face' is like.

"But the higher-ups of the 'Sleeves' recognize the value of the <<Box>> and sent a good assistant like you to."

As he takes a sip from the red tea with some anxiety, Cardeas swung a light jab. Zinnerman shows a mechanical wry smile and says,

"I'm just the runner. For our current state in the organization, the runners aren't supposed to be taking important missions."

As he faces the light black glow hidden in the eyes, Cardeas thinks: *there's a reaction.* The faint glow immediately vanishes, and Zinnerman lazily leans on the sofa.

"If there's bait right in front, they won't check the specifics. So if there's poison or a hook onto it…"

The smile disappears from Zinnerman's face as his eyes again show such an expression. Cardeas took a strike after taking this exchange of blows, and he clearly hears his heart pounding faster.

"The higher-ups will be very disappointed." Zinnerman chuckles, and that killing intent that even Gael, who was behind, reacted to, disappeared out of a sudden. "However, even if it's like this, we can't do anything to the famous Vist Foundation."

That smiling face shows that he has gone through a lot, and shows some form of self-defeatist attitude. However, his expression isn't showing any smile. His expression is saying, *try something funny and I'll kill you.* This is the man's 'face'. Zinnerman' s nature as a soldier of a defeated country. Cardeas laughs at himself for being bitten back as he gives a smirk. Good, now I can get into the main point—

"Captain, do you believe in the existence of Newtypes?"

Cardeas says as he puts the cup of red tea back onto the table. Zinnerman's hard rock-like eyes shook, "Well…" his tone has some doubt.

"In the middle of a battlefield, I did experience such a power that can only be explained as such."

That vague attitude of not wanting to answer straight on makes Zinnerman's beard look more cordial. Having gotten the satisfaction of taking revenge, Cardeas smiles, "Power. As expected of someone who experienced this."

"The first top-notched political philosopher in the Universal Century, Zeon Zum Deikun came up with this Newtype theory. This is truly 'power', humans who enter space unlock their hidden potentials while getting used to the wide space, expanding their knowledge, senses, insight, make completely communications without mistakes, understanding each other; this is the revolution of humanity…the embryonic period of 'Newtypes'. That's why humanity has to leave this cradle called earth. The residents of space, who felt that they were second-rate humans, found their future in the deep valley of space…and then, that war happened."

The doubt vanishes from Zinnerman's expression. Cardeas looks back at his cautious expression, and continues,

"The One Year War. The Republic of Zeon declared the independence of spacenoids and initiated a direct clash with the

Earth Federation…the one that triggered the start of the war is the Zabi family, who assassinated Zeon Deikum and sat on the throne of emperor. However, Zeon became famous as a country's name, and the name, and even the core thoughts on Zeonism has spread throughout humanity. It can be said that even when the war ended , the Federation has been fearing this 'power' they couldn't see. It's a 'power' that reveals the special rights of those privileged ones on Earth, and a 'power' that causes the spacenoids that were as good as abandoned to awaken. At the same time, it's a 'power', that can reverse the upper hand in the power struggle between Earth and space, one that can cause the Federation's order that was maintained for almost 100 years to collapse.

During these years, the Federation focused on fighting this invisible 'power'. They released humans who may be Newtypes and banned all sort of thoughts related to the thinking of Newtypes. On the other hand, though they created public enterprises that research on Newtypes, these are places for mad scientists to carry out their human experiments. They merely extracted the aspect of Newtypes being soldiers and artificially developed enhanced pilots."

He sees that Zinnerman's poker face is showing signs of cracks. That defeated country of his created Newtype-use weapons earlier than the Federation—the psycommu. If the artificially enhanced Newtype abilities have shown signs of development, maybe he saw a real example of a 'human experiment'. Cardeas' eyes look down, pretending not to notice Zinnerman wavering.

"This overbearing pressure caused the warlords to look up and create the inner struggle called the Gryphs Conflict. Coupled with

the two Neo Zeon Wars…the Federation's worn out, but if there's no academic definition that confirms that Newtypes exist, the Federation can gain an ally to achieve the final victory. Do you know what it is?"

Zinnerman answers "Time?". *This man is very sharp.* "That's right." Cardeas smiles.

"Humans' hearts change easily, and the public often forgets. It's true that people who're like Newtypes do exist, but they can only use that supernatural-like prediction ability as outstanding pilots and got their names recorded in the annals of history. Amongst the definitions Zeon Daikum gave, if we go by the one about ' understanding each other without mistakes', they're the group of people who're the furthest from that theory. The public, which only wants the outcome, is already sick and tired of this Newtype theory that is only a possibility. The name Newtype is now like taking down a king, and right now, only battle records, movies and novels will mention them. To decent politicians and scholars, this is even a taboo."

Besides, this isn't something that should be discussed seriously in such a situation. Cardeas can tell from Zinnerman's expression that he's trying his best to listen to this conclusion, and opens his lips that were wet by the red tea before continuing,

"Zeonism lost its element just like that, and the spacenoids' demonstration for self-independence was all wasted. It's like how in the old centuries, where capitalism defeated communism. The Earth Federation defeated this bottle of poison caused Zeonism. But, what's next? All that's left is the closure called stability. The

hierarchy wars amongst the spacenoids didn't even start as they were all wiped out before they even organized themselves, and the Federation government continue to maintain dominion. As the Republic of Zeon returns it's self-independence in UC 100, people will even forget the name Zeon.

You want to do something before that happens, and we don't feel secure with such a future…"

After finishing his dialogue, Cardeas finishes up the remaining red tea; Zinnerman, who was looking at him straight on, suddenly lowers his head and laughs.

He laughed louder and louder, looking up and laughing so loudly that the voice rang through the room. Before Flaste and the rest can even show doubtful looks, Zinnerman cheerily says, "I see , so we both have the same benefits and costs here." And pats his knee.

"So you're going to throw a rock into the still water surface…is this the real reason the Vist Foundation's handing us the << Laplace Box>>?"

In his laughing expression, there's a little glint of killing intent, and Cardeas smiles back at him.

"But is this really alright? If you're handing the <<Laplace Box> > over to us, the Foundation will lose it's co-existence with the Federation government."

"There are always risks in doing business."

"That's true. No matter whether it's the <<Box>> or the key… the thing you hand us may have a signal beacon, and the chances of you grasping our location isn't zero."

"This is given for free. If you don't believe so, please take it back ."

"Don't get angry. Don't the people in the past used to say that the things that are free are the scariest?"

He's giving a relaxed smile, but his body is even stiffer now. Cardeas again realizes that this man is hard to deal with, and looks at Zinnerman in the eyes.

"I just don't think the leader of the Vist Foundation will help do such a thing. But it's natural for us to become even more suspicious, and I managed to save my own life like this, so I don't intend to change this habit."

Though he's crude in his words, his sharp stare is looking over. I don't believe this is simply a business deal. Tell me the truth. Is it really like this? Cardeas lips show a smile, and says,

"You're a smart man, and a bold one at that."

These were undoubtedly words from the heart. "Thanks for the praise." Zinnerman immediately answers back.

"But I can't reveal everything here. This is a dangerous item."

"That's true, since it's something that can overturn the Federation's power…"

"I'm not looking at it in that way. This is a fact. That thing has the power to change the future."

Zinnerman narrows his eyes, and behind him, Flaste and company are showing tense expressions. They just got this most important information they never knew of, the contents of the << Box>>. Cardeas feels that they're tensing up, and continues cautiously,

"No, I should say that it has the power to get back the future that was originally meant to be. But this isn't something any normal person can continue. If it's messed up, it will have the power to destroy the world."

"So you're giving us the key to test it out…is this what you mean?"

"It's hard for people to trust others. Only the actions and outcome can prove the nature of others. It's best if you have the power to distinguish the truth in this world."

"The power to distinguish the truth of the world…sounds like Newtypes."

Zinnerman said it out slowly as if he's checking what he just answered. Good answer, Cardeas affirmed with a smile.

"On the other hand, those who only insist on only one of their own narrow ways will never see the contents of the <<Box>>."

Zinnerman sighed and says, "One thing…?" "Well, for example …" Cardeas strokes his chin and then looks at ZInnerman's eyes,

"The revival of Zeon."

Zinnerman's only reaction is to twitch his eyebrows. He hides the emotions that swelled in him under his skin and remains silent. Cardeas closes his mouth. Both of them look at each other, and the reception room enters a lull of silence.

The next sentence will decide this man's value. Cardeas waits for his reply, but is disappointed because of the phone ring. Zinnerman focuses on his phone, and he can only look over.

It's definitely not a small matter if there's a call to this room at this moment. Cardeas remains calm and looks at Gael, who picks up the phone. Gael doesn't look shaken, but as he hangs up the phone, the face he shows to Cardeas is full of tension. Cardeas greets Zinnerman and the rest before leaving his seat, and whispers to Gael in the corner of a room.

"The command module called over. Londo Bell's requesting to dock the <<Magallanica>>."

They're here. Cardeas was already mentally prepared for this, but feels that it shouldn't be possible. He asks calmly, "What's the matter?" "Seems like counter-terrorist inspection. Gael whispers."

"I've already requested the other side to contact Anaheim itself, but from the forceful attitude on the other side, it seems that the mobile suit squad has surrounded the colony."

"What about the contact with the army?"

"We're trying now…"

But we can't possibly expect. Both of them been in the Federation army before, he could understand what Gael was being anxious about. The way developments went so quickly isn't something that can be dealt with privately. The Federation will normally drag its fat body, and even operating a vehicle requires complicated procedures. However, if the upper-ups are all in unison, their movements will be faster and carry out such organization with amazing execution. Of course, the higher-ups aren't just the upper echelon of the group, but also those commanders who intend to become senators once they retire and the supporting senators, the leadership group of people who're helping the commanders in obtaining military goods.

The problem is, even though he should be one of the ' higher-ups', he couldn't detect Londo Bell's movements. Cardeas turns his head slightly and looks at Zinnerman. It seems that the ship left at the dock gave a signal, and he's listening to the report from the handheld wireless set. Have they detected that Londo Bell's here? For a moment, he wonders whether these people were the ones who brought the enemies here, but that's impossible. Even if they were tailed, a Federation ship won't look for trouble with Vist Foundation without talking it through with the ' higherups'.

"Martha…"

He remembers his own younger sister who was married to the leadership family of Anaheim Electronics, the Carbine family. She, who is 6 years younger than him, once fearlessly said: Since humanity gave birth to political marriages, women will have the right to play with authority. The 'higher-ups' mobilization of the army to prevent the handing over of the <<Box>> definitely involves her somehow.

"What are we going to do?" Gael asks. Cardeas intends to respond, but he's interrupted by another voice "Is this one of your tricks too?" Zinnerman holds onto the speaker in one hand and looks over.

"Most certainly not. I'm thinking of asking if you were tailed, but there won't be an agreement."

"I agree. It's really hard for people to trust others."

Zinnerman says without emotion as the smile on his face vanishes. To them, the situation is such that the Foundation is an accomplice of the army. Gael wants to step forward as Flaste shows a look of killing intent. Cardeas raises his hand to prevent both sides from taking action. There's no benefit for either side if we fight. He wanted to let everyone calm down, but gasp due to the sudden shock.

ZUN… A deep sound that could barely be heard echoed far away, and the teacup that's placed on the table trembles. The floor, walls and even the air shakes with it. This isn't a tremor focused at

one point, but an impact that spreads throughout the colony, causing this <<Magallanica>> to jerk.

Most likely, an explosion caused the reaction. He can't help but look at the ceiling, and then looks at Zinnerman. His eyes are saying that this is really an unfortunate development of events. He raises the wireless speaker in his right hand and points the protrusion of the antenna over. Obviously, this isn't an ordinary one, and Cardeas can only clench his fists hard as he faces this worst scenario.

Part 7

In fact, all this was caused by an accident. The one who took action first was Savoir, hidden alone behind the solar panel and surrounded by enemies.

He continues to hide from Londo Bell that's surrounding him, and if he sends a signal of the <<Garencieres>>, he will be found and shot. However, even if he prepares himself to die, the fact that Londo Bell discovers the enemy won't change at all.

He can either bet on whether the <<Garencieres>> won't get discovered, or immediately fight his way out, but both options are very risky. Just when Savoir's hesitating, something unexpected happened. The foot of the RGZ-95 <<ReZEL>> unit 03 that's resting on the solar panel touches the mini camera the <<Geara Zulu>> let out.

The mobile suit has a system that can pass the sound sources surrounding the armor to the pilot. The pilot of the 3rd unit <<

ReZEL>>, codenamed R003 lets it main camera look over at the feet. The small surveillance camera is only about 10cm big, and the fine cable that's extended out is connected to the <<Geara Zulu>> that's receiving the transmission. It's hard to tell with the light being reflected off the solar panel. The pilot merely thinks that it's a shrapnel, but right now, to Savoir's seeing a 20m tall giant looking down at him. The enemy's machine visor lights the eyes up, seemingly saying, *I found you.*

Savoir instinctively moves the mechanical arm, and the << Geara Zulu>> pulls out the beam rifle. He presses the firing key on the control panel, and put the <<Geara Zulu>>'s index finger on the gun's trigger. The fading MInovsky particles are being released from the E-Pace—the magazine for handheld beam rifles, and are compressed inside the gun, turning into hi-energy mega-particles are shoot out from the beam rifle's barrel. The Minovsky particles core fusion created the mega-particles, and these in turn shoot out from the machine gun-type beam rifle; not in a concentrated form, but in a rapid-fire form. The beams that's shot out like a machine gun attacks the Romeo 003 machine's frame.

If a rifle-type shot can be called a straight punch, the beam machine gun can be considered continuous jabs as they hit the << ReZEL>> from point blank range. The pink bullets hit the leg to the abdomen, and many charred black bullet holes appear on the Romeo 003's frame. Even though the reactor isn't destroyed, the cockpit's been hit directly, and the pilot's boiled before he can even react. The <<ReZEL>> that lost its pilot is short-circuited inside, giving off lots of sparks, and becomes some debris that floats in the shoal space region.

Savoir doesn't have the time to check whether the machine's shot down as he lets his own machine leave the solar panels. Since the battle has started, it'll be his death if he remains in the same place. If that's the case, he can only try his best to lure the enemy's machines and create a chance for the <<Garencieres>> to escape. He won't have the time to respond once he reports to the main squad.

"No wonder the conditions were so good. We definitely fell for a trap…!"

Savoir steps on the pedal and stares at the enemy's machines; not thinking about anything else at all. However, to the mobile suit squad that's launched from the <<Nahel Argama>> they feel that they're the bunnies who fell into the trap.

(IT'S THE 'SLEEVES'! MOVING TOWARDS THE INDUSTRIAL AREA!)

The pilots' voices echo through the wireless communicators once they knew that their ally was shot down, and the mobile suit that's assigned to the area all start to search for the enemy. That tense and confusing atmosphere spreads all around through static and wireless communicators, and enters Riddhe's ears while he's remaining on standby.

"The remnants of Zeon just don't learn…!"

He gripped onto the control joystick hard and says this. Even after the One Year War and the two Neo Zeon war, the 'Sleeves' are still carrying out terrorist attacks on the Earth's celestial

sphere—the remnants of Neo Zeon. The radar signal on the ally machine disappeared, and before they can realize what's the meaning behind this, squad leader Ian's command came through the wireless communicator (Romeo 002 warning all units, watch your surroundings.) Riddhe looks at the all-view 360 degrees styled monitor. There may be other enemies hiding in the surrounding space dust. On hearing the pilots growling at each other through the wireless radio; Mihiro and the other operators practically shouting and hollering, it struck him that Romeo 003 was shot down. It's just that simple, no dramatic flair, just the reporting of death through the laser signals…

And Savoir's not being caught up with such sad emotions as his <<Geara Zulu>> shoots the beam rifle, holding off the enemy suits that are coming over as he flies to the outer walls of <<Industrial 7 >>. He intends to lead the enemies into the microwaves near the solar panel, 'burn' the electronic equipment, stick near to the to the wall of the colony and escape to the industrial area where many civilian ships are.

The large cylinder is floating in vacuum, having become the second home of humanity—he has to damage the metal exterior. There's a sense of morality seeping inside him and the enemy. He doesn't want to use the colony as a shield, but having considered the difference in numbers on both sides, Savoir can't think of whether this is a good plan or not. Savoir's <<Geara Zulu>> flies past the spinning wall, and soon reaches the civilian block. The mobile suits of <<Nahel Argama>> can't snipe him, and it seem that both of them can only let Savoir's machine fly further, but the sudden attack of two units cause things to change.

Two <<ReZEL>> units, Romeo 005 and 007 transform into the waverider form, and the thrusters that are all gathered on the same point let out light. Both units have to make one huge turn to avoid the microwaves to catch Savoir's machine, but the <<ReZELs>> that transform into space jet fighters have acceleration ability that the <<Geara Zulu>> has no chance of matching. The two units reach the industrial area first and start to shoot at the <<Geara Zulu>>, which is at the colony wall.

"Fast…!"

The optical axis of the beam rifle hits Savoir's unit left leg, breaking off the part below the knee. The cockpit jerks violently, and the all-view monitor is flashing warning messages. The Velcro fasteners that detected the damage increases the suction, but Savoir's body still leaves the seat as the helmet's buried in the airbags that were shot out from the console. Savoir lifts his head up, and the airbag's sucked back in as the all-view monitor shows the <<ReZEL>> unit that's flying from below. Savoir instinctively fires the beam rifle. Once the beam weapon hits, the victim will not even have the time to feel death. It's over once he's hit, and he will be evaporated once he's hit by the beam rifle. Savoir's telling himself in his mind, I'm alive, I'm still alive, and continues to fire the trigger. The <<ReZEL>>continues to fly horizontally and dodge the bullets, transforming back into the mobile suit type when meeting with a <<Geara Zulu>> and uses the power of the acceleration to swing the beam saber down.

The <<Geara Zulu>> loses its right arm together with the rifle, and the other <<ReZEL>> attacks from above, swinging the hi-heat particle blade past Savoir's unit's nosetip and slicing the

movement cables at the abdomen. Despite taking consecutive hits, Savoir still pulls out the beam tomahawk, and the handle that's larger than the blade releases light particles to form an axe-shaped blade. However, the <<Geara Zulu>> is very slow without an arm and a leg. The two <<ReZELs>> easily dodge the beam tomahawks and continue to do hit and run tactics. The light for the saber transform into a beast's mouth as it devours the <<Geara Zulu>>, causing the battered machine to let out the conducting liquid that floats into vacuum like blood.

To any bystander, it looks like a delayed execution, but in fact, that's not the case. When near the colony, they must try not to use the rifle and trigger the reactor. The pilots of the <<ReZELs>> were just using common sense to close in on the enemy machine to stop it. This tactic is correct, and it uses the unique characteristic of the transformable mobile suit <<ReZEL>>. However, the pilots are all rookies who lack actual combat experience. As they continue to attack in the same patterns, Savoir's <<Geara Zulu>> floats towards the port, and the civilian ships that are entering and exiting the docking bay are each taking action to evacuate. However, they're still much closer than the agile mobile suits. Several ships collide with each other, and let out sparks as they graze each other. The scattered exterior damage the guiding lights, and even though they're all gathered, the ships that are entering and leaving in an orderly manner are in chaos, and screams and hollers can be heard from the port management authority.

Savoir hears these voices subconsciously. The all-view monitor is already more than half destroyed, and the ball-shaped cockpit is showing cracks on half the area. However, he still manages to see a transport ship colliding with a small ship. The machine's spinning,

and the images continue to enter his eyes. He sees the gateway of the docking bay getting closer, and the guiding lights are moving from down to up. *I have to get away from here,* Savoir thinks. *I might get civilian ships involved if I stay here, and I might even lose the chance for the <<Garencieres>> to escape. If the port carry out extreme measures and close all the gateways, it'll be over.* He has forgotten that the flying shrapnel stabbed into his abdomen, and blood's filling his helment. Savoir activates the thruster of the <<Geara Zulu>>, and this isn't something Savoir is doing as a person, but a pilot with morality and duty doing something instinctive.

The <<Geara Zulu>> that lost its limbs waves the tomahawk and roars. To the <<ReZEL>> pilots who haven't realized that this is already civilize spaceway, Savoir's actions just look suicidal. It's because they're rookies that they immediately use the beam rifles out of fear at that moment.

"ALL HAIL NEO ZEON!!"

Savoir's roar is covered by the Mega-particles that hit the cockpit directly. The reactor core doesn't collapse, but the <<Geara Zulu>> explodes from inside. The explosive ball of light that's expanding immediately lights up the docking bay, and the scattered shrapnel carry burning trails as they disappear into the dark space.

Part 8

The explosion seems to happen at the port as the impact reaches the gateway nearly, causing the air in the central port 1km away to vibrate slightly. It's not really a clear tremor, just a shaking of the air, a trembling that's like touching skin—

Inside one of the 4 ships floating there, at the deck of the << Garencieres>>, Marida senses this sensation from inside the cockpit of the <<Kshatriya>>. It's the cry of a person before the life vanishes—I'm here. Listen to me, everyone. After such a cry, the shockwave that came over like a burden rocks the air, creating goosebumps in her body and heart. She grips onto the control panel, and that horrifying chill that passes through her body made her tremble. Don't get swallowed by this, Marida told herself. Don' t empathize with a live that's gone. I'll show weaknesses if I do that, and I'll share the same fate one day.

On the all-view screen, he can see the workers who were preparing to leave the port suddenly stop and look around. The other crew members were also shocked by this slight tremor. (What is it? An explosion…?) Gilboa's voice came through the wireless communicator. He can feel this shockwave he can't understand, and Marida's angry over their slow-wittedness. Why are 'normal humans' so casual.

"IT'S SAVOIR! CAN'T YOU HEAR!?"

She can't help but roar out, and immediately regrets it. Gilboa's just an ordinary veteran pilot, and can't possibly hear Savoir's ' voice'. (Savoir?) Marida ignores Gilboa's surprised voice and asks, "How's the contact with the captain!?"

(It's cut. The Minovsky Particles got thicker. Activate the <<Kshatriya>>, save the captain, and get out of here.)

With any means necessary. Marida can slightly feel that Gilboa's panicking too, and asks again, "Are we going to start fighting inside the colony?"

(There're enemies outside. We can only break through from the inside of the colony. Faster!)

It's been more than ten minutes since they detected the enemy's presence, and though they started getting ready before Savoir notified them, it'll take some time before the <<Garencieres>> can leave. Besides 'her', there's also Zinnerman—her master that she can't leave behind, which means that there's a lot less things she can do. "Really…!" After grumbling, Marida lets the mechanical arm of the <<Kshatriya>> give a thumbs up to indicate to the deck personnel that she's ready to sorties.

The cargo hatch over, and the sliding cargo rack slides, pulling the <<Kshatriya>> out of the ship. The <<Kshatriya>>'s mono-eye lights up, releases itself from its restraints and bends its upper body. The wing-shaped emblem on the sleeve—the insignia of Neo Zeon is flashing. As it deploys the four large pods, the large body of the <<Kshatriya>> stands up at a corner of the dock.

While the other ship workers and port workers are all staring in disbelief, Marida puts on the helmet and pulls the visor down. The port doesn't have zero gravity, but it's rather inconvenient to move with all the air around. She has to consider the air resistance and increase the thruster burst, but if she just randomly shoot them out

, she'll send the surrounding people flying. She lands on the floor of the port, letting the soles hook grab onto the rails, and then watch the workers frantically leave. She lets the <<Kshatriya>> move forward and chase away the people floating in the air until she can finally use her thrusters safely. Suddenly, she feels a sharp killing intent.

The enemy's here. Marida sees this instinct that's transformed into a flash pass by her forehead, leaving behind a tiny vestige of light in her mind. The flash cause the psycommu's power to increase, shooting out form the cockpit and activating the funnel that's hidden in the <<Kshatriya>> pods. Before Marida even realizes it, three funnel binders fly out from the pods and start moving like they're shot out.

The 2m-long attack drones shoot out its boosters, and the funnel-shaped machines all fly towards the port. The front unit flies past the heads of the port workers, through partitions that are sealed up, and immediately reaches the port before firing the mega-particle beam, breaking a small hole through the thick wall that's separating this place from vacuum. As the air flow becomes stronger, the other two units fly out of the port.

The enemy that's entering the port—the Federation's main unit <<Jegan>> is showing signs of wavering as it moves through the large gateway for ships. The funnels fly out from the melted hole and shoots out its thrusters for a short while before surrounding the <<Jegan>> in three directions. Marida closes her eyes and analyzes the situation inside her heart. She can clearly sense that the <<Jegan>>'s feeling killing intent from the three small objects and intends to retreat.

"Too slow."

She opens her eyes as she said this. The beams shot from the funnels burn through the cockpit of the <<Jegan>> and pierce through the control panel. The bright green machine has a burned hole there, and the <<Jegan>> that can't move anymore floats out of the port. The funnels immediately return and fight their way through the air that's flowing out. The anti-fire system activates on detecting air flow outside, and as the large amount of rubber balls that are filled with lots of drying wall foam reach there, the last unit has already left the port. As her consciousness capture the trails of loyal hunting dogs, Marida holds her breath and grabs onto the ball-shaped control panel.

There's still a lot of enemies behind her. Since the front unit's defeated, they'll get ready to fight as they enter the colony. As she shakes off this uneasy feeling clinging on her, Marida steps on the pedal. The thrusters that are equipped on the 4 pods light up, and her body feels the acceleration as she's held down on the linear seat. She continues to blow aside workers and preservation materials, and the huge mass of the <<Kshatriya>> that's more than 74 tonnes in weight flies in the air.

The machine flies through the final gateway leading into the colony and enters it through the airtight wall covered by the 'hills'. She moves down the artificial sun pillar and heads to the airtight room on the other side. The street lights that cover the inner wall light up the air, and a starry night-like scene surrounds Marida.

These little dots are all human living habitats, looking like normal daily lights that are as weak as glass—the images she saw in the day appeared in her mind. Marida bites on lips. *Now's not the time to think about such things. The enemy's behind me.* She has to do something big to lure the enemy away from the <<Garencieres >>.

She glides through the heavy air, and the moss-green machine that's mixed in the night stops suddenly. Marida lets her body and machine feel the friction that's different from piloting in real life, and lets the <<Kshatriya>> face the pursuers.

Part 9

The deep yet long siren sound signifies the beginning. Banagher , who's alone, leaning on the handrail of the roof, hears this echo and lifts his head.

Looking down the mansion, the night scene is the same as before. The sound of the siren sounds similar to damage outside the colony, but this is too quiet. Banagher thinks. It's not rare for larger pieces to collide and damage the outer walls, but normally speaking, the streets will have emergency vehicles around to check on the inner and outer operations of the colony when the siren rings, and there's no signs of them now.

"Huh? Another meteorite?" A casual chatter can be heard beside his foot. At the balcony below, there're five, six faces that are flushed red with alcohol. "Oi, someone switch on the TV, please?" Another person spoke, someone else chokes himself and

yells, “DAMN IT! THERE’S NO AIR!” Banagher frowns and looks at the group of people who treated the siren as an amusement, and is about to go down to the level below. Suddenly, a flash that appears causes him to widen his eyes.

The lights that appear like lines flashed 2, 3 times in the air, and immediately lights up the inner walls of the wide colony. 10km away, the flashes light the ‘hills’ facing the Earth like day, showing the dark shadows of clouds floating in the air. The loud explosion rocks the entire interior of the colony.

The loud volume and lights that covers the senses continue to ring and echo through the air. Banagher feels giddy as well as he hears a girl scream. He saw it on TV before, a flash and sound that’ s similar to lightning on Earth—the only difference is that the light cutting through the night sky forms a weird straight stroke. Banagher grips onto the handrail hard and stares at the colored flash in the sky. The pink light axis appears again, shining through the clouds and onto the artificial sun pillar. He then sees an orange ring expanding.

The thunderclap-like rumbling continues, and sounds of explosions ring through the clouds, accompanying the deafening sounds of metal being ripped as the bright flames are etched into Banagher’s vision. The fireball emits black smoke as it glides in the air and falls towards the inner wall. As it crashes, it creates a large mushroom cloud, and Banagher feels that the handrail on the roof is shaking.

The screams downstairs got more intense. “IT CRASHED!” “ ISN’T THAT WHERE LUWAN’S HOUSE IS!?” Voices like these

echoed. Some of them screamed, “IT’S A WAR! THERE’S FIGHTING OVER THERE!?” That voice make Banagher feel like he was dragged on the shoulder, but he continues to stare at the starry sky. His consciousness was attracted to an object that instantly appeared for a moment in the clouds when the flames of explosion expanded.

The thing has a sharp head and thick limbs, and from its shoulders, 4 wings extend out. He seem to see a giant in the form of a devil in those comics, rumbling in the clouds. “What is that…? ” Banagher muttered. His heart is pounding hard, and the unknown impulse surges in him. At this moment, it’s a bad thing when they don’t know who the enemy is, and it’s dangerous to be in such an obvious place. The words he never thought of before is ringing in Banagher’s mind, and he uses his hand to press onto the trembling forehead. *What’s wrong with me? My body and mind wants to move on their own.* He hears his body screaming, *hurry up and do something about this situation. Take action—*

“Hey, that’s not a Federation’s unit. Is it Zeon’s?”

A familiar voice came from below Banagher’s feet, and he regains his senses before looking down. Takuya, who’s holding onto Haro, is pointing at the space where the giant with 4 wings is. Beside him, Micott is gripping onto the balcony handrail tightly, and her tense back profile is standing there blankly. Banagher suddenly feels a chill down his spine and again looks at the sky.

“Zeon…Neo Zeon?”

He subconsciously mutters as he turns to look at the airtight wall facing the moon. The flash that's being given off is an ominous red, lighting the roofs over on the other side of the colony . *Audrey's in the 'snail' on the other side.* Banagher suddenly thinks. She, who went to meet with the Vist Foundation alone; she, who's seemingly pursued by soldiers; she, who when asked whether she' s an activist, gave a vague answer that may be even scarier—

Banagher never thought of what to do as he's being driven by impulse. He looks down and sees the entrance of the mansion. The Foundation's limo is still at where it was, but the men in suits are all outside the vehicle. They look up at the flashes that appear from time to time, speaking into the wireless communicator. Even from afar, one can see their panicked expressions, which proves that this is an accident for the Foundation as well.

Cardeas Vist's cockiness felt vexing. His expression seemed to say, *I have everything under control*, but now, there's a scenario even he couldn't predict. With this conclusion, Banagher realizes that Audrey, who's in his hands, is in danger, and an unknown impulse rocks his heart. In the midst of extreme violence that's full of flashes and noise, Banagher grabs onto the roof's handrail. The charred stench that's like soot in the air—the stench created by the beam weapons scatter all around, and this is the first time Banagher smells the stench of the battlefield.

Part 10

Even with air, the tremors can spread through a plane that they' re in contact with. On the outer-most area of the <<wheel>> of

Industrial 7, the people are hidden inside the <<Loto>> under what can be called underground, and Commander Daguza Mackle feels the vibration coming from the seat.

"Looks like we were attacked by enemy ambush and started fighting inside the colony."

The operator sitting at the front seat hands the scouting report over. It's just as predicted. The irregular tremors aren't triggered by things like meteorites and stuff crashing into each other. The mobile suit squad of the <<Nahel Argama>>'s being pulled off by the enemy and stretched the boundary of the battlefield into the colony. Daguza really wants to lash out at the impulsiveness of these amateurs and ask, "What's the situation?" "Not good." The operator answers without looking back,

"It's said that there's only one enemy unit, but it seems like it's equipped with psycommu. Our side already has some damage."

And there's damage to the colony as well. Daguza adds on in his heart and looks over at the driver seat's display. The two <<Lotos>> arrive at the attack point, and the fully-armed men are all waiting for the signal to begin. The original plan's to surround the colony, coordinate with the mobile suit squad, let the <<Nahel Argama>> force itself into the dock, and begin the operation. However, things end up like this. Whether they're to continue on or stop, the squad leader Daguza has to decide when they can't contact the outside world.

From the current situation, it seems that the battle just happened unexpectedly. In that case, the Vist Foundation and the '

Sleeves' are busy protecting themselves and can't possibly prevent this secret deal from being carried out. In this case, this means that their plan to stop this deal is done. But even like that, their prime target, the <<Laplace Box>> is still dangling there. Even if they decide to evacuate, the 'Sleeves' will think of a way to get it. The Vist Foundation's movements aren't easy to predict, but they'll definitely carry out some resistance. It's very likely that they'll use this chaos of the battle to snatch the 'box' back and head into the deepest parts of the courtyard.

It's the place that's protected by ideologies and authority, and even the things that can be seen inside can become invisible. The courtyard in the deepest part of the Foundation—is a place where the army, and even the prime minister of the Federation government can't enter. That's why the 'box' is protected till now. However, what happened in the past doesn't matter. To ECOAS, the most important thing is to complete this mission and decide whether the situation allows them to do so. Most importantly, if they retreat and reorganize themselves, the 'box' will be hidden in a place they can't touch.

There's no second chance. Daguza shakes off all other concerns because of this and orders his troops emotionlessly, "Notify everyone. We're going in."

A deep red color flashes inside the machine, and the operator answers "Roger" and faces the console again. Daguza's heart isn't confused or hesitating, just thinking of how to deal with the current situation. He checks with the pilot sitting beside the operator, "Can we do it?". The <<Loto>> that's in tank mode can carry a lift for lifting goods, but the problem is after that. The pilot'

s masked face moves slightly and honestly answers, “This is the first time I’m doing this, but I was once trained to deal with psycommu.”

“We can do it. If we use the mobility of the <<Loto>>, we can at least wear down the enemy numbers.”

“Roger that. Hand me the firing control. Just focus on driving.”

“Roger that.” The pilot answers rather enthusiastically. Their aim is to prevent the enemy machine from getting near to the << Magallanica>> and helping to complete the enemy’s mission, but the <<Loto>>’s involvement in the battle has an effect of supporting their allies. They can’t expect the <<Loto>> to fight effectively as a mobile suit when it doesn’t have any beam weapons, which will make this mission riskier, but Daguza feels that this is worth betting their lives on. At least, it’s better to see how the battle goes without being spotted instead of hiding in a dark cave.

Of course, he knows that this is a wish he can’t say out. Parts aren’t supposed to have hopes and expectations. It’s not because of whether they’re being picky about the mission, but that they want to finish the mission they’re in charge of. It’s because of such specifics they demand of themselves as they take action that the world can continue to rotate. Daguza doesn’t have any doubts about this reasoning to himself as he looks at the multiple lights on the display.

Infiltrate near the target, take it down, snatch and destroy. That’ s the trace of light that reflects each ECOAS member’s actions.

Each person has their own mission, and together, forms this group called ECOAS. Daguza's the squad leader, the part called the eye, observing the movements of the other intrinsic parts. The <<Loto> > starts to move, and with the deep rumbling sound of the track rotation, the operator continues on with a flat tone,

"Alpha, Bravo, move out. Secure targets. 1, the command block; 2, the authority block. Collect related intel on the 'box', confirm location and secure it. Our priority's to secure the 'box'. All obstacles are to be eliminated. I repeat. All obstacles are to be eliminated…"

Thanks to the relay point they set before, the wireless radio's rather clear even with Minovsky Particles flying around. The ECOAS members move down to the outer-most area of the Wheel, waiting on standby near the linkway of the colony builder << Magallanica>> before starting their move.

All sorts of safety mechanisms on the <<Magallanica>>, including electricity, are all self-generated. There are no circuits shared with the colony, as only the construction materials used to form them are the same as <<Industrial 7>>. However, this large gate is closed, and now, there's no way for both squads to contact each other. They set up several access points, but each of them have layers of securify, and they have Vist Foundation's guards watching. Every single one of them are armed with weapons, and have a history of being either part of the police or the army. They're more like a private army of the Foundation than guards.

However, there are still openings. In the colony's construction management, a part of the <<Wheel>> has to involve the << Magallanica>>, so both paths are linked. Of course, they can't get through the satellite, and the safety procedures of the circuits prevent both server and chemical attacks. They don't know if the maintenance passages exist or not, so the inspections are carried out by remote controls, which is very thoroughly. However, it's not like nobody's interfering. With the heat release considered, there's a separation between the pipes. ECOAS, which is divided into Alpha and Beta climb up from the floor of the <<Wheel>> and proceed in different tunnels. Both squads then choose a 'doorkin' to sneak into the duct that's giving off hot air.

The cabled passage is only 70cm wide, and there's a distance of more than 200m from here to the <<Magallanica>>. In this narrow passage where it's hard to move freely, the 'doorkin' plug out the gathered cables to remove the alarm in the passage as he continues to move in. About 30 minutes later, he reaches the standby location . He uses a small blowtorch to open holes in the wall that are just big enough for the small cameras that are the size of cables. The cameras that can be controlled remotely move around like snakes as the tip with the lens slip out from the gaps in the floor.

At a passage with a duct, there's a guard there. He's not wearing a spacesuit, but the suit is bulging unnaturally underneath, and one can tell that he has a shoulder-arms weapon underneath. The lens rotates, checking the positions of the cameras in the ceiling of the passage, and the 'doorkin' enter a standby phase. Based on the situation, he can sometimes wait for up to a day without eating or sleeping, but this time, they only waited for

15 minutes. Once they hear the action command in the wireless radio, the 'doorkins' open the hatch of the duct, and the floor above bounced.

The alarm rings as the hatch opens, and it's too late when the people in the security center realized that there's something wrong . The floor that's floating under zero gravity hits the ceiling, and before any sound is even made, the 'doorkin' has already moved behind the guard's back, covering the mouth with his left hands and using knife to stab into the guard's back. The blade is stabbed in between the ribs, and with a little twist, the air flows into the lungs. The guard's raised hand is limp, and dies without being able to let out any sound. The 'doorkin' tosses the limp corpse aside and starts his actual mission.

He removes the tunnel lock and opens the door leading to the airlock. The way to the entrance is opened, and the main force that' s waiting in the <<Wheel>> start to move. The dark grey normal suits leap off the floor of the <<Wheel>>, using portable thrusters to get through the passage in an instant. After passing through the airlock of the <<Magallanica>>, they abandon the heavy thrusters and use the mobile handles on the wall to move forward. The ' doorkin' receives the recoilless carbine rifle from the last person who enters and follows them.

They use their masks to hide their faces under the helmet, and the group carry their recoilless carbine rifles and silently move through the zero-gravity passage. They destroy the cameras on the way and reach a junction. The squad leader standing at the side indicates that everyone is to scatter. The members kick the wall down in a skilled manner and raise their carbines before squeezing

down the trigger of the cable gun attached at the bottom of the rifle to fire the steel cable. The steel cables that are shot out start to spiral, and the members quickly turn to where they're heading to. They send one person as the forward and one person to watch the back. Even with guards appearing, they continues to let the cable gun fire at the same speed, firing their carbines once the guards appear in their way, and shooting out 5mm bullets that shattered the guards chest.

The contact with the guards is being cut off one by one, and the visual images of many cameras are being cut. Both entrances are being invaded at the same time, causing the security center of the <<Magallanica>> to panic. The intruders, 16 men altogether in squads of 8 will scatter whenever they reach a junction, and enter the central block like poison. The center personnel activate the alarm, trying to close the partitions of the tunnels, but it's too late for this countermeasure to be used. The intruders have already found the security circuits and used their guns to wreck most of the wires. The people with army expression don't think that they' re the guerillas from the 'Sleeves'.

"Manhunters. THE INTRUDERS ARE MANHUNTERS! EVERYONE, TAKE NOTE—"

The voice of the central block personnel that came from the wireless address is cut. The guards that are armed with automatic handguns are gliding by, and feel scared on hearing that unnatural cut. However, they haven't made the mistake of revealing their positions by shouting. The enemies are the manhunters, the special forces that even the Federation army is terrified of. A guard who once trained with them when he was serving the army warns his

comrades. *Stick together. We must move out together as a team. No matter what the manhunters are planning, the command block will definitely be the target. Once we seal off the partitions and take them out one at a time, we'll have a chance.* However, the guards that intend to shout this into the radio are just a normal army to the ECOAS members.

A guard who's moving with 3 comrades finds that there are signs of intruders at a junction. He uses his hand signals to communicate with his comrades, and intend to pincer the intruder from both front and back. His comrades head off to the front, while he heads in the corner to trail the enemy. The enemy hasn't realized this yet. They should be wearing bulletproof vests, but they can't possibly move with ten handguns rounds slammed into them. The guard raises his recoilless rifle and waits for his comrades to contact him through radio, but from the corner of his eye, he sees that something's sliding here on the mobile handle from the wall on the other side.

It's a Flashbang. As the guard sees that item that's the size of a lighter arrive, it explodes in front of his eyes, and 2.5 million Candela of light appeared. A loud noise rings in his ears, causing his muscles to numb for the moment. The guard loses his sight and mobility, and he, together with his allies, is like a fried fish floating up when they're cooked. The members of ECOAS point their guns at the guards on the premise of eliminating obstacles, and the muzzles with caps shoot out bullets. The guard is shot through the chest and sent spinning a round before slamming into the wall. Other gunshots can be heard from all around, and during the explosions, noise can be heard throughout. If the <<Magallanica>> can be described as a snail, then ECOAS started its invasion from

near the center, and has immediately expanded its territory, getting the outer shell involved as they head down the main body—the central block where the command console and other important facilities are at. They need the data in the central block and technicians to control them. The others are to be treated as people with potential to be obstacles. The people who enter the members' sight will be shot whether they have weapons or not, and there's a lot of hot blank magazines and floating blood on the passages.

The command console block is about to be taken, and there are investigators who're entering the residential area inside the wall. Two members land on the residential area that are covered with grass. They're loaded with nightvision equipment that can be put on the helmets, and the heavy equipped normal suits are running through the quiet prairie. The surrounding air's full of killing intent, but the steady appearance of the Vist's residence is still lying in darkness.

Part 11

Audrey's habit when she detects danger is to immediately turn off the lights in the room. Through the weak light that's coming through the window from outside, she moves towards the bed.

She checks that there's enough space under the bed to crawl into, and bends down as she holds her breath. The occasional tremors continue. And it's not hard to imagine that something happened to <<Industrial 7>>, probably a war. But now, she has to pay attention to the gunshots and explosions. The clear but soft explosion sounds can be heard, unlike the rumbling sounds that's

been going on till now. It's not from the outside, but the sound of air colliding with each other in this colony builder.

Ever since the first gunshot rang, the atmosphere's in the house has been pretty noisy. There's a lot more tension and killing intent that fills the air this time as compared to the rumbling of the colony. Is it Zinnerman's actions? Audrey grabs onto the bedsheet tightly. Impossible. If that's the case, she will be taken as a hostage and moved away from here. And if there's no signs of this, that means—

She doesn't know. That's right, the scariest moment is when she doesn't know what happens. Audrey remembers her childhood. At the deepest part of the large battleship, she will listen to her regent and sit on the throne. Once the battle started, the ship started to rattle, and the adults will definitely say: it'll soon be over . Please relax, princess. That's not true. I want to know exactly what's going on. If I knew, I will be able to respond in turn no matter how young I am, but the adults just don't want to scare this kid.

*Ever since I was born, I'm always called princess and treated as one; that's why I'm often out of touch with reality. Even Zinnerman…*as she continues to think, the shrill breaking sound rings beside Audrey, and she instinctively hides under the bed.

Gunshots, ringing in the house, sounds of glass shattering, sounds of objects collapsing downstairs; Audrey hugs her head and curls her body, holding her breath. The gunshot rings again, and this time, it rang outside the door. After that, she hears something heavy land with a thud. After a while, footsteps and

presences can be detected outside the wall, and a shadow appears through the light shining into the gap between the door and the wall.

The door creaks open, and Audrey forces her stiff body to lean towards the inside of the bed. It's not Zinnerman and the rest. The presence outside the door feels really rigid and even less reliable. Maybe the door will be broken down the next moment, and the bed will be riddled with bullets. Audrey tries her best to open her closed eyes and notice everything around her. This continues for another 10 seconds, and the sound coming from the door handle stops as the shadow on the floor disappears.

The footsteps move further away. It seem that the person heard some radio signal. Audrey's sweaty hand lets go of the velvet on the floor. She cautiously climbs out from under the bed, fidgeting towards the door. She looks through the old-styled keyhole, and there's no one on the corridor.

The corridor's lit by the soft decorative lights on the wall and the hard lamp lights above, and there's a whiff of white smoke that smells like smoke. Besides the stinging head, there's a unique bloody smell. Audrey makes up her mind, takes a deep breath, and opens the door slightly. The first thing she sees is a pool of blood that flowed to the entrance.

She follows the blood trail, and can see a man in suit sprawled over there with his handgun on the floor. Audrey can tell from his splattered head that this is caused by a rifle. She endures the nauseating feeling and leaves the room, covering her nose with her hand as she watches the man with slightly purple brain juices

splattered on the floor. From the suit and the physique, she knows that he's someone of the Foundation, and she saw a few times before.

Let alone a handgun, it's not easy to bring a rifle when it's so big. It's definitely not Zinnerman's group who did this. Audrey tries her best to steady her trembling knees. There's another organization taking action; they planned to carry out their attack and ambushed this <<Magallanica>>. Most likely, they sensed that the 'Sleeves' have made contact with the Vist Foundation, and came to stop the transfer of the <<Laplace Box>>—in that case, it's easy to guess who the attackers are.

Is the battle inside the colony their diversion? Audrey thought halfway through before stopping and leans herself on the corridor wall, beside the body. No matter what the attackers aim to do, it seem that they don't know that she's here. She has to use this time to get out from this house and meet with Zinnerman and the rest. Since things ended up like this, Zinnerman will give up getting the 'box'. She has to stop them from losing their chance to escape just because they're looking for her, and end up stirring the battle, which will be a mistake on their priorities.

I have to be faster. This anxiety awakens that strength inside her to step outside. Audrey holds her breath and walks down the stairs, quickly walking through corridors that may still have attackers. She goes through the room which only has the tapestry, leaves the atrium in front of the entrance, and sees the outside of the house in front of her, the dark forest.

Part 12

"Game is up. Hand 'her' over to me."

Zinnerman points the wireless speaker over at him, and his subordinates do the same, holding down Gael and company who reached their hands into their coats. Is it a bluff, or are there really bullets inside the speakers? Before he can even think, Zinnerman's hand let out a flash and an explosive sound, and sparks fly beside Cardeas' feet.

Zinnerman then points the speaker at Gael, not letting him get the chance to move forward. Both of them are staring at each other, and Cardeas senses that the other party's serious, whispering, " Calm down, captain!"

"I intend to do that right from the beginning. Even if I plan to set you up, I won't use such a stupid plan."

"Your words and actions already proves this. You never said that 'she's in your hands, and this happened."

Another rumbling occurs as he finished, and the explosion rang. A lot of dust land behind Zinnerman. Cardeas can tell that there isn't just a a battle inside the colony, and that someone's trying to barge into this <<Magallanica>> to take control. The phone that was ringing until now is suddenly interrupted, so the intruders must have cut off the line.

There's no need to suppress the entire <<Magallanica>>, which means that the army—the 'higher-ups'—intend to use this chance to get the <<Laplace Box>>. They're just eliminating the 'Sleeves'

out of convenience, and their top priority is to secure the 'box'. He can imagine the higher ups giving an order like 'Eliminate any obstacles, even if it's the leader of the Foundation. If anything happens, the successor to the Foundation is amongst the higher ups'…

Zinnerman should have realized that this attack wasn't just targeted at them, but his thinking is hindered by the fact that 'she' is in the Foundation's hands. Cardeas watches him as he's unable to distinguish between deliberation and coincidence as his expression is just showing that he's intent on getting her 'back'. He admits, "That's true." and quickly scans around everywhere, remembering where the tables and chairs are.

"I'm thinking the same way. What are you going to do? If you shoot here, everyone will die, and we can't save 'her'."

Zinnermans' eyelids tremble as his expression drifts. The tense killing intent is wavering, and Cardeas watches his expression show a somewhat comprehensive look like before as he raises the back of the chair nearby.

Due to the low gravity, the chair floats up higher than expected. At this close distance, it's still not a strange thing to fire, but Cardeas believes that Zinnerman won't fire that easily. A louder explosion rings, and everyone's attention is diverted. Cardeas then throws the chair at Zinnerman and immediately gets down on the ground without waiting for the chair to create a sound.

Numerous gunshots ring above Cardeas' head, and Gael's large body presses down on him. Two gunshots can then be heard

beside his ears. He lets out a slight moan and hears people being slammed on the wall. Cardeas' pulled up from the floor by someone, and is about to be brought out of the room when there's a louder cracking sound than a gunshot. The white smoke fills the reception room. Numerous gunshots can be heard through the smoke, and he feels that there's a lot of heat beside his ears, and his right shoulder got hit with a huge impact.

It feels like he's hit by a hot rod. Cardeas feels faint, and Gael catches him before his hand touches the ground. Gael continues to shoot back as he drags Cardeas to the lift. Cardeas watches his escort get shot, and blood scatters in the white smoke.

On the other side of the smoke, it seems that Zinnerman's large profile has gotten away. Before they can recap on what happened in this worst outcome, the smoke from the smoke grenade rolls onto the corridor, covering him. Cardeas and Gael enter the lift, and rise from the living block to the central block.

The smoke that seeps in irritates the eyes, and for every cough made, the shoulder will hurt. It's a graze, but a hot gunshot wound that's like a slash will hurt a lot. "Your wound…" Gael approaches , and Cardeas interrupts, "I'm fine. You?" as he picks up the intercom phone at the control desk.

Even though they knew that it's dead, they're still trying their luck. Amazingly, the phone links to the command console miraculously. "Chairman! Thank goodness you're alright!" Cardeas asks back, "What's the situation?"

"We're invaded by land forces. Looks like it may be the special forces of the Federation."

Cardeas feels some chill, and he exchanges looks with Gael. This is the truly scary part of the Federation when they're serious; using special forces as thieves in a hit and run operation—'Hurry up and delete all classified information regarding the <<Box>>." Cardeas says,

"Scrap the data for the <<UC Plan>>. Let all the Anaheim workers escape in the capsules. You too, hurry up and leave. The enemies are professionals, so try and avoid a meaningless battle… "

Thud, the phone's suddenly cut. Cardeas put down the phone at looks over at Gael.

"I'm going to the command console. How's the situation with the radio?"

"We can't use it normally. The Minovsky Particles are too much …"

Gael's bloodied large body is bent down, using his handkerchief to press onto Cardeas' wound. Since they can't use radio, they can't rely on their surviving subordinates. Having realized that only he and Gael are the only ones who can complete this job in this worst case scenario, Cardeas says, "I'll go alone to the command console. You're to go over to the <<Unicorn>>."

He's worried about 'her', but he can only believe that Zinnerman and the rest will save her. Cardeas stretches his arm out at Gael "But, chairman, you alone…" He's not agreeing with this verbally, but Gael hands over to small handgun in his ankle holster.

"Sorry…I got betrayed by my relative, and things ended up like this."

He endures the pain on the shoulder and slides the sleeve open, putting the first bullet into the chamber. "Madam Martha?" Cardeas doesn't answer Gael's question as he puts the small handgun into his pocket.

"The 100-year alliance is so weak…we're the ones who broke it first, but they intend to use this chance to snatch everything away. I'll leave the <<Unicorn>> to you. If it's about to be taken away, destroy it."

He has a premonition that this may be the last time they're meeting each other. After taking a slight breath, Cardeas sees that Gael's straight expression is talking to him wordlessly, and says for the final time.

"We must not let that fall into the Federation's hands…!"

Part 13

It's still a visible battlefield, but the range is rather long when fighting in space. As both sides are moving at several kilometres per second, a little criss-cross will send them going about 100,

200m away. Thus, the pilots use a matter radar that works within 20km to catch sight of the enemy, get close such that the optical sensors—the mobile suits' 'eyes' can be seen, and then attack when they're getting past each other. They do use beam sabers to slice at each other at zero distance, and they'll shoot at each other from 10km away as they will then get into the enemy's blind spots.

Thus, to mobile suit, this 'cylinder' colony is way too cramped to fight in. They have to fight with a range of what's basically a ground battle, use the AMBAC system to fight in mid-air, which is a basic must, and also, they have to handle this unexpected air resistance that is really annoying. Air's continuing to flow in here as there are artificial currents used for heating near the artificial sun at the center axis, and at the inner wall, there's air flow caused by the Coriolis' Effect as the colony spins, causing the winds to interfere with each other and blow.

The mobiles suits of the Nahel Argama enter <<Industrial 7>>, and before they can get used to this environment, they're caught under enemy bombardment. The first one to lose his life is the 3rd <<Jegan>> unit. The machine becomes a fireball and is pulled by inertia, ending up crashing into the inner wall of the colony and smashed to smithereens. Black smoke flies up from the crash point and is being dragged by the Coriolis Effect, forming a black ring in the spinning inner wall of the colony. They're unable to scatter inside the narrow space colony, and the pilots of <<ReZEL>> no. 5 and 7 can only cover each other with their backs facing each other as they look around.

They know where the enemy mobile suit is, but what's scary are the automatic cannons near the clouds—the <<Funnels>>. They're

so small that they can't be detected easily, and may even slide into their blind spots. The advancement of the psycommu cause the distance control of the <<Funnels>> to be easier, but the movements of the enemy is rather otherworldly too as they haven' t gotten a single hit. This isn't something that an ordinary pilot can do.

"Is that guy a Newtype...?"

The pilot of unit no. 5 whispered, and the pilot of unit no. 7 retorts back through the radio that's full of static, "Don't spout nonsense!" A Newtype can detect the enemy's 'presence' through the armor of a mobile suit, predict their moves and attack; and to the pilots, that's a synonym of 'monster'.

In fact, the <<Kshatriya>> is fast, and dodged the moment its enemies were about to fire. However, it's not an easy battle for Marida at all. The air causes the machine to become heavy, and the movements of the <<Funnels>> become slow. She has to consider the safety of the colony and use the <<Funnels>> to surround the enemies and take them down, but the blowing wind is causing trouble for her.

However, she can't just shoot to restrain. The power of the mega-particles may shoot through the outer wall of the colony if it's shot wrongly. If she doesn't shoot at the best moment, the enemy units may crash into the inner wall of the colony. She has to predict the enemy's movements and let them crash into the airtight walls or the construction place without anyone around. She doesn't want to let that enemy machine land in the middle of the colony like just now.

"All because I saw the colony a little bit…!"

The laughing children and the young mother pushing the baby pram appears in front of her eyes. Marida shoots the thrusters and continues to flip consecutively as she closes in on the firing lines of the Vulcan guns. She uses the pillar of artificial sun as a shield, lets out three new <<Funnels>> and use the mechanical arms in the pods to take back the <<Funnels>> that have run out of battery. There's a mechanical arm for each of the four pods, called hidden hands. The main unit itself has a small beam saber and three simple fingers, and the <<Kshatriya>> that takes the <<Funnels>> back like a windmill is like a monster. The fire of the Vulcan gun lights its moss green surface, and there's a grazing sound between the machine and the wide air; the 20m tall monster is flying in the night sky of <<Industrial 7>>.

The fires that are flashing within 3km in the sky look just like sparks from a fairy's wand. Even when one can hear the sound of the thrusters and Vulcan cannons that sound like a noisy machine is being started, most of the residents still don't know what happens. The Port Management gave an alert, but not many

people at the Autonomy Bureau even knew of why this order was given, and the emergency broadcast on the television only shows the residents evacuating. The police and the firefighters who came out to check on the situation can only look up at the sky with the residents.

Even if it's like this, the firefighters and patrol cars are moving down the roads after seeing the residential area burn. Some residents are already taking action on their own. Most of them are people who experienced war, and from the stench of ozone in the air that came with the wind, they start to evacuate without waiting for the Autonomy Bureau to advise them. Families of all sizes are carrying emergency backpacks or filling their electric cars with their valuables, and the roads leading to the air-raid shelters are slowly packed out. The Autonomy Bureau never changes the evacuation plans, and the police's coordination is too slow, making these reasons why the chaos got escalated. Honks and roars continue to echo, and <<Industrial 7>> is gradually sinking into panic.

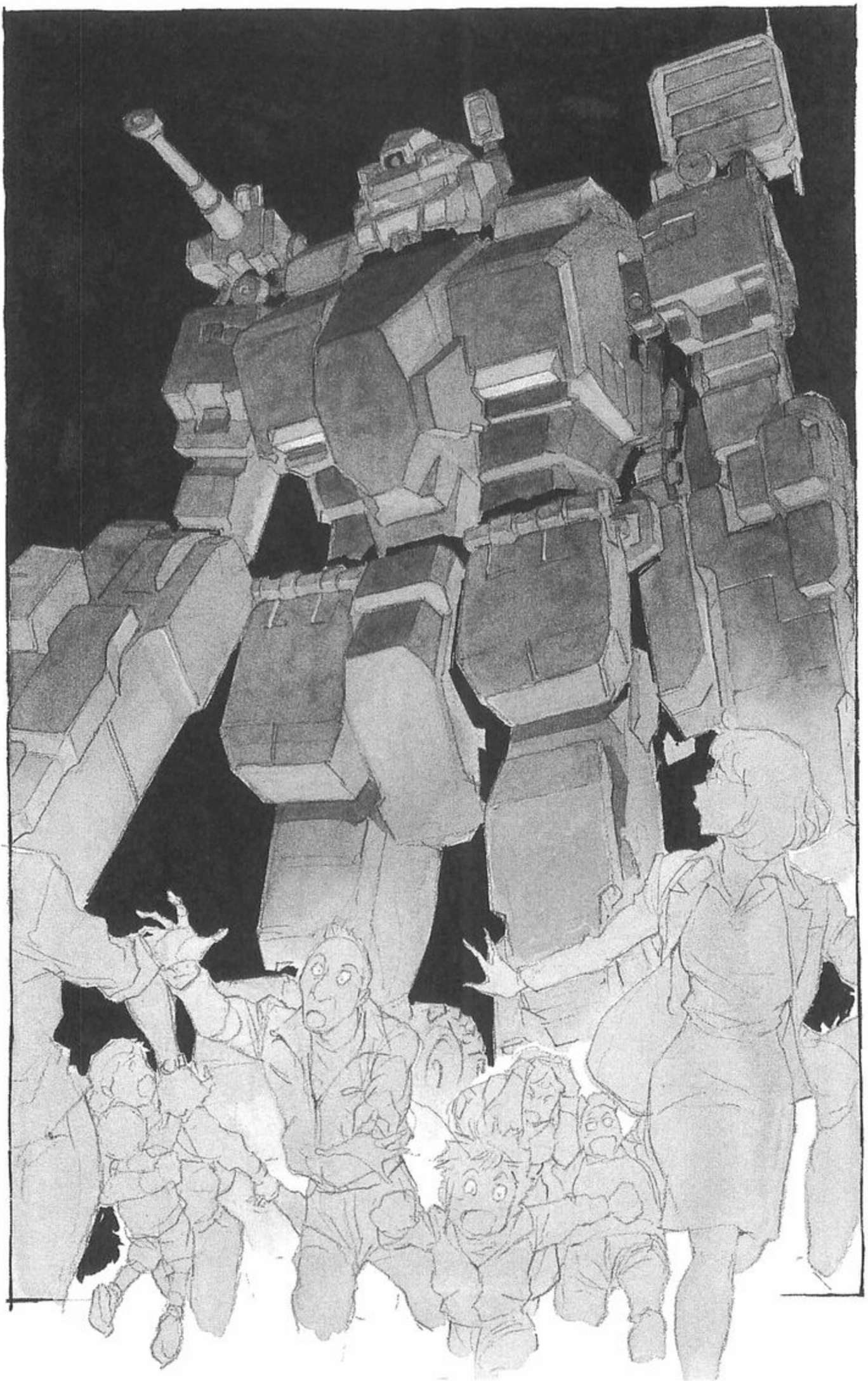
The oxygen masks that are on the roadside are activated, and calls can be heard. "EVERYONE GET ONE EACH!" "CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE ONE, RIGHT!?" The electric cars that are stuck move towards the opposite land out of impatience, and accelerate off while ignoring the police. There all air-raid shelters for emergency refuge are all over the place, and they can reach without taking electric cars. However, they are aiming for the underground space below the colony. 150m deep into the outer walls, there are passages for emergency use leading to capsules for escape.

"Even if we evacuate to the air-raid shelters, we're dead if the colony's wrecked. Better get on the capsules."

Those drivers with experiences of disaster drive off to the construction area. The elevators down into the underground are managed by the colony's management, and they are not to be opened without the Autonomy Bureau's permission. However, there's a chance if it's the construction area where works are under way. The elevator's not locked and still activated. Once the information came from the workers, the rows of electric cars cross the barricade and enter the colony. However, there's a large congestion of cars when they arrive at the cargo lift entrance.

This isn't because the hatch is closed, but that they feel that the elevator's moving up. The door's suddenly rammed open from the inside, and a large tank comes out. This one unit takes up the space of 6 cars as it moves up the elevator. The brown armored vehicle that rises to landscape of the inner wall seem to hesitate on seeing the large number of electric cars blocking their way, but it immediately starts to move forward.

The men who were trying to open the metal door frantically create a path. The tank that's 10m long and 6m wide at most rushes into the electric cars. The caterpillar wheels are about to crush the electric cars in front of them when the tank suddenly activates its thrusters and flies its vehicle body over the drivers' head.



Its shape transforms, and both 'feet' land in the gaps between the cars. The surrounding electric cars are sent flying because of the impact. The upright tank again lets out its thrusters, ignoring the shocked residents. It transforms into the mobile suit <<Loto>> and gets past the cars like jumping on stones, breaking the barricade and leaving the construction area. Daguza watches the disorderly evacuation in a disappointed manner, but he immediately pulls down the periscope that's for a captain to use and used the green nightvision monitor to look for enemies.

The enemy mobile suit on the monitor that is flailing its 4 wings easily dodges the 60mm Vulcan cannons from the two <<ReZELs>>. Daguza activates the automatic tracker set and calls for the driver to move forward. If possible, he doesn't want to leave this construction area that has very few people, but a necessary landscape is required to use anti-psycommu weapons. The <<Loto>>'s large body tramples the road of the complicated commercial district, and the jet exhaust of the thrusters shatter the shops' glass. The <<Loto>> leaps towards the office area.

A 3rd <<ReZEL>> flies out from the cargo transport entrance in the 'hill', and fires of Vulcan guns can be seen blazing in the air. they can't use powerful beam rifles in the colony, and can only take down the enemy's cockpit with a beam saber. However, the 4 wings cause them to be unable to do anything. The 3 <<ReZELs>> can only be played around with. Suddenly, a beam comes in from a completely different direction, cutting through the night sky and lighting the artificial sun pillar that's in darkness. The <<ReZEL>> that got hit has its leg broken, and with that explosion, rocks the <<Loto>>. There's static on the nightvision, but Daguza notices that

the movements of the 4 wings are a little slow. There's an opening when it's going to take back the battery-depleted <<Funnels>>— Daguza presses the firing mechanism on the periscope's grip.

The 25mm cannon that is equipped on the right shoulder of the <<Loto>> releases sparks, and fires out a tracer round out of every five shots. The green light glides through the sky. Physical bullets that are shot on Earth will create an arc down due to the pull of gravity, but the colony's Coriolis' effect cause the fire to spin in the opposite direction. Of course, the firearms control system of the << Loto>> reloads it. The fire flies towards the enemy unit at a very high curve, but the 4 wings immediately dodged the fire. It was set at automatic lock-on, yet the machine dodges it with a beautiful somersault.

It's like that machine detected our 'killing intent'. Daguza gasps and yells at the pilot, "IT'S COMING FOR US! MOVE!" He wasn't hoping that the cannon will take the enemy down at all, just focused on watching their own unit. Daguza leaves the driver seat of the <<Loto>> before it changes back into a tank and moves, and opens the hatch leading to the outside.

The wind pressure that strikes surrounds him. Daguza glances aside and sees the buildings gathered in the office area on both sides, and moves up onto the <<Loto>>. He gets onto the cannon which is still smoking with heat, and moves over to the hidden head. He uses the hook that's fastened on the steel ring to steady his body, and raises a rocket launcher with both hands.

He puts his face near the conductance bar and watches the aiming scope. Small jet of lights appear in the sky, and the lights

that he see in the night screen are becoming bigger. 1, 2…there are 3 <<Funnels>>. Daguza fires the activation switch of the launcher and removes the restrain on the warhead.

The tank-mode <<Loto>> knocks aside the electric cars that are parked on the road shoulders and runs on the road at a top speed of 150km per hour. The <<Funnels>> continue to chase with a speed no less than 300km per hour even with the Coriolis' effect. The enemy probably won't shoot from the sky to avoid damage to the colony, and will try to get close, surround and shoot at one point. Daguza puts his finger on the trigger of the rocket and waits for the chance. The <<Loto>> reaches a cross junction, and the vehicle turns 90 degrees.

A <<Funnel>> that got away from the Coriolis effect and are flying 10m away from the ground suddenly stopped. *Now!* As they appear from the corner of that large building in front, Daguza squeezes the trigger, and the launcher fires a 'net' 10m wide with tremendous backfire. It expands in mid-air, and a <<Funnel>> land inside the steel fires as they're restrained.

If it's not touching the wall, the centrifuge force won't work no matter how low it's flying. The <<Funnel>> under zero gravity won't slow down or fall, but the net that caught affects its trajectories and cause it to crash into a building. Once it touches the building under 1G worth of gravity, the object itself will be captured by the 1G gravity. The <<Funnel>> that touches the building shatters the glass, slams through the wall, and slides down on the tarmac surface for several meters before crashing into the phone booth and stopping.

The <<Funnel>>-type automatic cannon is captured by gravity and doesn't have the capability to fly it. Daguza reloads and waits for the next chance to fire. It's not a flashy plan, but it's effective. Once he uses this plan to eliminate the <<Funnels>>, his allies can take down the enemy that doesn't have it's trump weapon. Daguza is very delighted that the anti-psycommu tactic works. He feels a resounding sense of a real battle, and that's something he can't get for being unable to see actual combat. He's enjoying the bitter taste of adrenaline.

Perhaps this excitement causes his vision to narrow. The next moment the <<Loto>> reaches the next corner, Daguza fires the second shot. The second net that opens takes down another one, but there are people on the road. The crowds of people heading from the offices to the air-raid shelters are walking down the streets in lines.

The <<Funnel>>'s 2m long, but the weight of it isn't something that can be compared to filling an oil barrel with crude oil. The << Funnel>> that crashes into the ground crushes the electric car on the shoulder, crashes past the barricade and lands on the path. Daguza looks at that twisted piece of metal crush what seemed like an office lady, and also involve several people in this. He hears the crashing sound and the screams, and hesitates as he's about to reload a third time.

This is a fatal error that must not be made in a real battle. The < <Funnel>> slides into the blind spot and aims the cannon at the << Loto>>. Daguza is too late in detecting the mega-particle light.

The beam pierces through the back of the <<Loto>>, evaporating the control zone and cutting through to the front. The <<Loto>> explodes and blows apart the armor on top. Daguza's sent flying into the air and crashes into the building's wall with the debris. His cervical spine isn't snapped thanks to the specially made normal suit and his own luck. Daguza passes out, and the <<Loto>> that's engulfed in fire explodes.

This explosion that rocks that office area is a lot better than the second time the attack comes at the residential area. The <<ReZEL>> no. 7 that has its leg torn off by a cannon hit from a <<Funnel>> crashes into the school compound of Anaheim Electronics Industrial College. The body itself is a mobile suit 25.8 tonnes heavy, and crashes into the wall in a spiral at a speed of 167m per second. There's no explosion, but the school compound is completely crushed. The <<ReZEL>>'s buried in the rubble. The pilot is protected by the safety airbags and saved from a concussion, and in his groggy vision, glares at the enemy suit.

"Damned Zeon monster…"

As he shakes aside the rubble, the beam rifle in the <<ReZEL>>'s hand shoots out the mega-particle cannons. The pink beam axis crosses through the colony and hits the site preparation area that's in the way. Marida manages to dodge it and the last side, and feels a chill from the 'presence' of the pilot that comes over faster than the beam.

It's not just an enemy's intent, but also hatred. The thick killing intent is released from the beam shot of the beam rifle, causing the

skin underneath the normal suit to have goosebumps. Marida sees the site preparatory block that's hit directly by the beam and exploded from the inside, and the floor of the large steel structure is covered in flames. Her control movement of the <<Kshatriya>> starts to slow down. If she moves wildly, the enemy's trajectory will change, causing the inner wall in the trajectory to be wrecked by the beam rifle. She can't expect the pilot that's overwhelmed by hatred to control his sanity and shoot patiently, and she has to keep him silent. This anxiety causes the psycommu installation's effect to increase, and the <<Funnels>> that are activated rush towards <<ReZEL>> no. 7.

Unit 7 is still shooting the beam rifle wildly. The three <<Funnels>> rush there, cutting through the air and closing in on the enemy. At this moment, <<ReZEL>> no. 1 rushes over, causing Marida to have to focus on controlling the <<Kshatriya>> again. She feels that the <<Funnels>> are becoming less reactive and are disturbed by the Coriolis' effect. That resistance inside her is pressing on her senses, and her mind's being dragged aside.

"Too strong…!"

As she subconsciously moans, the enemy swings its beam saber over as the Vulcan gun's fire closes in. The beam that's shot from the inner wall grazes the <<Kshatriya>>'s armor. Marida's being agitated by the pressure of three strong antagonistic intent, and now focuses her attacks all over, causing the <<Funnels>> to open fire.

The 3 <<Funnels>> that sweep past the ground shoot out their mega-particle cannons. One shot hits the cockpit in the centre

abdomen, one shot hits the mechanical arm with the beam rifle, and <<ReZEL>> no. 7 is down. However, the last hit pierces through the thruster pack from the side, hitting the small reactor core hidden inside.

A nuclear reaction happens inside, and the reactor that provides energy is crushed—a power the lower of a nuclear bomb expands out to the surroundings. The radiation is kept inside the core and the <<I-field>>, which prevents it from leaking, but with the explosion, the heat waves released ignites all the combustibles, and a supersonic wave become a storm that sweeps the interior of the colony. <<ReZEL>> no. 7 becomes a really hot fireball, lighting the night sky of <<Industrial 7>> like a miniature sun.

The concrete parts that are scattered all around the machine are instantly evaporated. The school that's hit by the impact is crushed and collapsed. The unit itself landed in the school, so most of the heat waves are covered by the Anaheim Electronics compound, but the direct hit causes the houses within a radius of 500m to be wrecked, blowing away the residents that are evacuating. The inner wall itself is also caught in the collapse. The area of the explosion start to blister due to the extreme heat, the heat waves and the impact move through the layers of heat, reaching the outer wall 50m below, breaking the common linkway, exploding the energy block with the water tank for water vapour explosion, and finally rupturing through the outer wall and entering space. A corner of the <<Industrial 7>> cylinder is caught in a light of explosion.

A flash is released from the residential area, and a large cabbage cloud appears there. The smoke that's like a cauliflower

immediately shrinks back. This isn't because of air flow, but that a corner of the inner wall has a hole, and the air's starting to flow out. Marida evades the enemies that are distracted by the explosion and sees that scene. At the center of the residential area, there's a round black burnt mark about 1km wide in diameter, and there's still a burning light on the charred surface. The flames quickly disappear with the strong winds, and a large amount of smoke, rubble and human-shaped charred remains are sucked into the round hole. The vastly decreasing pressure create mist, and it's hard to tell what's the situation with the hole, but that hole is definitely not just 100m wide in diameter. The hole that's opened is way too big, and the armor repair parts on the machine definitely can't fill it as the rumbling white mist is gradually expanding—

"Damn it…"

I actually hit the reactor directly. Marida bites her lips hard. The many 'voices' that are wrecked by the fires and sucked out into the vacuum echo in the colony, causing this <<Industrial 7>> air that's normally being sucked in this thin membrane to roar. The lips that are bitten let out blood that form small blobs of blood that floats in front of Marida's eyes.

Part 14

White smoke is rumbling, and a huge explosion happens several shrapnel away from here. The smoke that rises with the explosion expands its range, and this smoke is sucked into the exploded hole at the same time. This hole looks like it's gathering mist, and the poison gas that's like a phantom floats over.

"THERE'S A HOLE IN THE COLONY!' Someone yelled. Banagher, who ran down the emergency staircase alone, sees that scene as he steps out of the entrance. The colony has a hole, and the air around the hole is gradually sucked in. The condensed steam forms mist, and the explosion from before cause the inner wall to collapse and open a hole. This wasn't just shouted randomly.

"ARE WE REALLY AT WAR HERE!?"

"WHERE'RE THE OXYGEN MASKS!? HURRY UP AND GET TO THE AIR-RAID SHELTER!"

The residents of the mansion who are also running out of the house all shout as they scamper away. The mindless lights on the streets lights the anxious expressions of their faces. "Don't panic! Everyone, calm down! Each air-raid shelter is enough to fit everyone inside!" Some police officers' growls are mixed in, but there aren't any signs of systematic evacuation. The explosions in the air above continue to ring at times, and the phone booths are showing signs of overcrowding. Banagher heads down the buildings on the side of the street and look down at the site of the explosion far away. The area there has tilted with the inner wall, and the slanted side that's like a hill that's bloated doesn't have any electrical power, only a slightly black land. The burns that are like cigarette ash are scattered, and there is mist swaying around the circle. What should be there—the school compound of Anaheim electronics is all gone. There's only a pile of black ash covering its building, and there's no signs of rubble with fire that can be seen at all.

Is it because it sublimed with the explosion, or did it get sucked outside? On hearing this sound that's filled with intense breathing, and one that doesn't sound like himself, Banagher grips his trembling hands. *Are there students in the campus—it's the weekend today, so I believe there shouldn't be anyone else left in school. If that's not the case…*

His shoulder is knocked by an impact, causing his distracted attention to return. Banagher ignores the person he knocked into and only cares about looking around. There's something more important he has to do instead of checking the damages of the college. He immediately finds what he wants, and instinctively shouts out, "THE LIMO OVER THERE, WAIT!"

The men who are about to close the limo door are shocked and look around. Banagher kicks the ground and dashes over to that black limo. He passes through the crowd and uses his hand to grab onto the car window that's about to close. The man sitting in the driver's seat widens his eyes, and the man sitting in the assistant seat gasp slightly.

"Let me get on too."

Banagher pokes his head into the window of the assistant seat as he says this. These two, who are either guards of the Vist Foundation or watching over him, stare at his face for a few moments and blink a few times in shock. In this situation, they won't care about some surveillance or guards. Banagher knows that they want to go back to the <<Snail>>. The young man sitting in the driver's seat gives a completely different expression and

growls back softly, “Don’t kid around. Why must we…” But Banagher doesn’t let him finish.

“Isn’t it your job to protect me?”

The man in the driver seat looks like he’s at a loss of words as he shuts his mouth. There’s no other way to get to the <<Snail>> beside going with these two people. Banagher knows that this is reckless, but he has no idea of how to get close there. *I have to do this.* This impulse continues to echo inside his heart. Banagher grabs tightly onto the door handle on the side to prevent the men from realizing that he’s trembling, and looks at the elderly man in the assistant seat. That man narrows his eyes with hard-to-determine expression, looks over behind Banagher, and points over with his chin, “Those guys too?”

Banagher looks back, and is completely speechless. Takuya and Micott are standing over there, and there’s a group of 7, 8 people behind them, all who have appeared in the party. These people all look at Banagher with pale expressions. Micott says before Banagher can even react, “If you’re going to get to safety, bring us along too.” And steps forward, forcing Banagher to lean onto the limo.

“Why…why aren’t you going to the air-raid shelter at the mansion?”

“We don’t know which idiot went crazy and locked it from inside.” Takuya carries Haro and arrives before Micott before interrupting, “The people living nearby all went home, but we can’

t go back in this situation. Everyone's locked out. There's no place to go to either."

"We don't know if we can get to the air-raid shelters in other places, and there's a hole at the school, so we can't go near there… if we can get into the <<Snail>>…"

As she says that, Micott glances at the assistant seat of the limo. *How did it end up like this?* Banagher, who never intended to evacuate, watches the anxious looks on these people's faces, and instinctively feels that it's dangerous to go there. There's nothing to explain this feeling, and he looks over at the sky above where the fighting's still continuing.

In the layers of clouds where it's impossible to tell whether these are clouds of smokes of explosions, the thruster jet lights are flickering away, and there are fires of beams flying all over the place from time to time. *There're probably many people fighting there, are there? From the way things look here, the inner wall on the other side is showing flashes as well. Even an amateur can understand that the battlefield is being expanded. Those may be the enemy unit from Neo Zeon and the Federation mobile suits chasing after it…to us who just saw the streets wrecked and have to watch for stray shots, there's no point determining who's friend or foe here. Everything will just put us in danger, and may even land in front of us in the next instant. Since the explosion was strong enough to create a hole in the colony, we won't survive if we stay in the air-raid shelters.*

No matter where we are, the danger present will never change. Banagher convinces himself and puts his head into the assistant's

seat window again. “Please let everyone get in.” He said, and the elderly man looks back wordlessly.

“Or else I’ll shout that you guys are the ones who started this battle.”

Banagher whispers and exerts more force on the hand gripping onto the door handle. At this moment, the facts don’t matter. The most important thing is that they won’t be able to get away if the evacuees with killing intent surround them. “This guy…” Banagher ignores the groan of the man in the driver’s seat and looks over the elderly man. Both of them look at each other for several seconds, and the elderly man then looks over at the man on the driver’s seat, indicating with his expression to open the passenger seat.

“EVERYONE, GET ON!”

Banagher yells as he opens the back seat. He nods at the unmoving elderly man appreciatively, and pushes Micott and the rest inside.

No matter how wide this high class limo is, the place is as packed as sardines with 9 people in there. Banagher pokes his upper body out from the back seat and puts himself the car like he’s sitting on a box to allow him to put himself in the car. He knocks his still trembling hand onto the roof of the car, indicating that everyone’s on board. The limo seems to give up as it honks and starts to move forward. They avoid the evacuees that ran onto the road and head towards the airtight wall facing the moon. There’s wind blowing because the car’s moving forward and the air’s

flowing to the hole. This wind whips up dust and litter, and the slowly-blowing wind become a whirlwind and is sucked into the vacuum. The air inside the colony shouldn't be sucked out that easily, but in this situation, it seem that an emergency repair can't repair that hole that's created from an explosion. Some people amongst the evacuees have already put on their oxygen masks.

The airtight walls of the air-raid shelters under the Community Center and the artificial hills are closed up one after another. The people who can' evacuate in time run off to the next air-raid shelter, and a beam that looks like thunder echoes through the sky. Banagher looks inside the car, and Micott are the other girls are clinging onto each other. Takuya doesn't have anything to comfort them about and remains silent. The abnormal air that fills the colony and the sounds and lights of violence overwhelm this place, causing everyone to be numb about this.

What in the world is this? Banagher doesn't have the strength to meet anyone in the eyes and mutters to him. It's been less than 20 minutes since he first witnessed the flames of the battle, but there wasn't anything before. They're in an ordinary daily life that nobody can change, but why is it that the lives of many are overturned in just 10 minutes? The daily life that made him so ' disjointed', and the sturdy walls that surround them are all so weak.

Even if he doesn't feel that he's able to blend into his surroundings, he doesn't want everything to be overturned just like that. He doesn't know what caused the war, but he can't allow those people to die without even knowing why or what happened before they were vaporized inside the explosion. It can't be helped

if it was a war, but this unreasonable sudden attack is just like a terrorist attack. This overly extreme circumstance doesn't allow for anyone to vent their emotions.

But—just as he's thinking about this, his body and mind is starting to get used to this. Banagher notices that he's already starting to be able to react calmly and accordingly rather than being drowned in the dissipated of the part. There's no ' disjointedness' there, and no suffocation. It's like he's awakened, or like a blindfold's removed.

Maybe my mind is really wrong somewhere. Banagher presses onto his pulsating forehead. He notices that he also has an impulse to let his head knock into the roof of the car to spill out whatever's inside, but realizes that it's better to follow this unknown instinct. If not, he won't be able to survive and save 'her'. Such rational thoughts are telling him off inside his mind.

"Audrey…!"

Banagher looks over at the airtight wall facing the moon in front of him, and subconsciously yells out. An explosion appears in the sky again, immediately lighting the airtight wall that's covered in darkness silently.

Part 15

Snow dances about in the sky, and this snow is coming from the colony, glowing as they enter the darkness. Of course, these things aren't real snow, but the sand, rubble and burnt remains of the plants or electric cars that are flowing out of the hole. They're

giving off light by reflecting the sunlight, forming debris in the shoal space region and disappearing into the darkness. That scene seems to look like the colony's shooting out snow.

As compared to the large space colony, that hole looks like a fingertip—however, the diameter is no smaller than 50m. the hole will spin together with the colony, sucking away the surrounding objects and the air. The small objects that look like snowflakes gather together, and Riddhe instinctively turns the camera of the << <ReZEL>> over there and looks at an object on the enlarged monitor. He feels that goosebumps rising up on his skin.

It's a burnt car. Riddhe stares at the object that's completely distorted in shape, and notices the fact that there's no one inside. He hurriedly closes the enlarged screen and opens the visor of his helmet and wipes the sweat off before closing the visor again. He wants to wipe away the sweat floating out from his chest, but the normal suit he's wearing won't allow him to do so. His underwear is wet too, and he knows his socks are wet. He hasn't even shot once, never even met an enemy, and yet—

It's been past 30 minutes since the battle started. Even though he entered the battle zone <<Industrial 7>> together with the << Nahel Argama>>, but the Ian squad, including Riddhe, hasn't seen any signs of enemies. They just know from the unconfirmed broadcast that half of their comrades were shot down, but they have no idea about what happened to the Norm's squad inside the colony or how many enemies there are. Time just passes just like that, and even the reliable laser communicator can't receive intel due to the wall of the colony. Right now, what Riddhe and the rest, and the <<Nahel Argama>> can only do is to listen to the messy

communications and decipher what's going on through the interrupted information.

(Avoid fighting inside the colony! Don't take risks and go in.)

(Romeo 005's communication is cut. Please respond!)

(The manhunters…ECOAS' tank is destroyed. How's the aid!?)

(The enemy's equipped with psycommu! We're for the taking!)

(Just one unit…! One mobile suit actually…!)

Half of Norm's squad is wrecked. Riddhe remembers the voices of the wireless communicator, and checks where the allied machines are around the colony. Including his own unit, there are four <<ReZELs>> and 2 <<Jegans>> flying around, matching the relative velocity of the colony and starting at the large cylinder that has become a battlefield. If he were in a different group, he may be part of the group being watched; he may be fighting against the enemy's machine with the psycommu, and then poked holes all over the place by the <<Funnels>>, just like the machines that are blown up and scattered inside the inner walls of the colony.

(Romeo 002 notifying all units. Ian's squad is to cover the mothership. Don't let down your guard to the surroundings. The enemy unit may come out from the hole in the colony.)

Squad leader Ian seems to detect everyone's jumpy emotions. If he wasn't controlling them, the squad that's coming out of their

lines might be jumpy and head to the colony. Riddhe can understand this feeling, and he's of the same too. It's too painful to wait and watch them fight a tough battle, and it'll be easier to just rush into the battlefield directly. However, even though he wants to get some credit in his fire battle, he can't help but think that this is a joke after knowing that there's only one enemy, and that enemy wrecked an entire squad. Even if the mobile suit is equipped with psycommu, that pilot's way too abnormal.

"Newtypes…that's just a superstition on those spacenoids' part."

This term is used to represent the different status of the space residents. Riddhe feels that the humidity of the 'home' is filling the cockpit, wants to lick his mouth, and steps on the pedal. The machine frame of the <<ReZEL>> shakes slightly as it floats towards the moon. The wall of the colony is moving on the monitor, and he sets the front screen onto the colony builder that's in front of the colony itself.

Riddhe looks at this 'Wheel' that takes up one-quarter of the colony and the head that looks like a 'Snail'. He remembers the name of the 'Snail' is called <<Magallanica>> and looks at the command module that's on the enlarged monitor, which is about the equivalent of a snail's head. He sees the front end of the command console room that's not moving, and there's a white object the size of a thumb. That's the pure white ship body of the <<Nahel Argama>>

This first-of-its-kind large ship of the Federation army is just the size of a toy to the <<Magallanica>> that's over 5000m. Riddhe

adjusts the wireless frequency and tries to probe for the communications between the <<Nahel Argama>> and the << Magallanica>>. The radio channel is less effective than the basic wireless, but even with the Minovsky particles affecting, he should be able to hear something from such a close distance. Soon after, (We don't permit…you to enter the dock). A voice with static echoes, and the noise start to mess up the speaker inside the helmet.

"This facility is recognized by the colony association, and is legal for use by Anaheim Electronics…)

(We have a war here! As a Federation ship, this ship has the authority to carry out counter-terrorist measures!)

The voice covers the operator who's speaking emotionlessly, as Captain Otto's angry words echo through the static. This mobile suit squad is on the brink of collapse, and the badger-like old man who's normally cool-headed can't remain calm. Riddhe hears,

(<<Magallanica>>. I'm Alberto. Open up now.)

Another voice suddenly enters this conversation. Alberto—the associate Anaheim sent to ride on this ship. Riddhe remembers this man's face as he yapped about the <<Laplace's Box>> in the captain's room that will make anyone unhappy, and can't help but blurt, "That fatso. Why so arrogant at such a time…" Once he said that, a roar came from the other side of the wireless radio (Did, did you hear that!?), and the awkward voice of the operator on the other side can be heard, (Yes, I hear you.)

(Even the Vist Foundation doesn't have the authority to refuse the army. Open up.)

(But the chairman…)

(I'll take responsibility! Let us in if you don't want the manhunters to kill all of you!)

Does this guy think that he's controlling the entire army? Riddhe hears what can be said to be arrogant words, and feels uncomfortable again. However, the light that appears next cause him to widen his eyes. The guiding lights of the <<Magallanica>> start to light up, and the two beams in the vacuum form a road.

The main thrusters exhaust behind the ship start to tremble slightly, and the <<Nahel Argama>> start to move forward slowly . The <<Magallanica>> really opens its gateway and prepares to let the ship enter. From this move, it seems that Alberto's command was really effective. Ridhe sees that the wireless channel has been switched to the port master of the <<Magallanica>> instructing the ship. Riddhe looks forward, and can't close his mouth for several seconds.

"Who is that guy…"

He says he's just a subordinate, but why is it that a guy who only introduces himself as an associate of Anaheim can cause the subordinates of the large shareholder Vist Foundation to collapse just by saying his name? He finds that this is weird. RIddhe stares at the <<Nahel Argama>>, and his heart suddenly jumps by a sudden impact. Squad leader Ian, who unknowingly approached

in his <<ReZEL>>, knocked into Riddhe's machine and taps on the calf of the machine's left leg.

(The mothership will send out the launch. Ensign Riddhe, go support the mothership.)

Captain Ian's voice can be heard through the contact loop better than the wireless communicator. "Yes" Riddhe answers, shaking up as he doesn't realize that Captain Ian was approaching him at all. *I can't survive like this.* He thought. "But we're in a battle now. Who's going to take the ride? And we're sending escorts?"

(It's the guests. The bigshot from Anaheim wants to enter the colony builder. The enemy doesn't seem to have snuck in, but don' t let your guard down.)

After saying that, Ian's machine moves itself away and floats down to the right. He feels that he's been removed from combat duty, but Riddhe shoulders this unhappy feeling and moves towards the <<Nahel Argama>>. It's better to move his body than to wait for the enemy that might appear at random moments. Since the guests from Anaheim want to start moving, he wants to see what they're intending to do.

At the gravity zone right in the center of what looks like a snail' s snail', the spacegate of the <<Magallanica>>, which itself is at least 300m in diameter, opens slowly as it bends down both sides of the solar panel. The large body of the <<Nahel Argama>> moves in. Riddhe slides through the partition from the right side, and activates the brake thrusters to restrict his movements in front of the second gate. The first gate closes, and the area is starting to

be filled with oxygen. As the digital indicator of the pressure gauge is rising, the <<Nahel Argama>> opens the back launcher, and a launch appears on the catapult.

The launch is a term borrowed from the navy. It refers to a small space submarine for communication use riding on a ship. The launch on the <<Nahel Argama>> is an old-styled ship used since the One Year War. There are handrails all over the sub, so the people outside can ride on it. In emergency use, this can also be used as an escape boat.

Right now, many people in normal suits are holding onto the handrails. The launch is carrying the people that look like a bouquet of lilies as it floats on the catapult. What's weird is that these people are all wielding recoilless rifles, and from the looks of things, it's like they're land soldiers ready to land. Their expressions are all covered by the helmet visors, which makes it impossible to see them, but from the way they're holding their weapons, one can assume that they're trained. This scene doesn't make them look like they're investigating a civilian outfit.

"What's going on…"

"Why is this happening…?"

It's like he's leading a private army—he can't tell if Alberto is inside the sub as he stares at the thruster jet light that flies out from the catapult. Soon after, the second gate is opened, and the <<Nahel Argama>> follows the launch and enters the <<Magallanica>>'s dock.

Part 16

It's rather scary riding on the cargo lift at the airtight wall and moving 3,000m in the air. The lift that's used for moving doesn't have a wall or a ceiling, and the limo can be said to be fixed on a metal block, moving up to the slanted surface of the airtight wall. Of course, the higher the height, the closer the fires of the battlefield in the air. The fires and the mobile suit thruster jets that pass through the clouds are blinking, causing the defenseless limo to be light up. Whatever that happens in the next ten minutes will be left to the heavens.

The doors leading from the colony to the 'Snail' are all over the artificial sun, and there're 6 of them. Each of them are airtight walls that are 15m wide. The limo reaches one of them, and Banagher immediately leaps out of the limo. They're near the axis of the colony, so this place is completely free of gravity, and if he doesn't mess up how he kicks the ground, he won't find it hard to move around. He has to move for another 50m before he gets to the door, but Banagher finds a shortcut after taking a few steps.

He just came by here with Audrey a few hours ago, so he vaguely remembers where the roads are. "Oi, Banagher! Wait!" Banagher hears Takuya's voice and stands in front of the partition and looks up at the large wall. This large wall that's used to transport goods is tightly shut, but there are access points on both sides for people to use. They used these doors to enter the 'Snail' a while ago.

Another shot may come flying here when they stand around like that. Banagher presses the button for access, but the passage

point seem to be locked, and there doesn't seem to be any reaction from the number lock beside as he pressed on it. *We can't do without a cardkey.* Banagher clicks his tongue and returns back to the car.

Takuya, who's carrying Haro, asks, "No go?" and Banagher moves by him as if he's trying to cut short the answering time and head towards the limo. Most likely, there's something wrong with the fixations as the limo's still stuck on the lift and unable to move. While the man on the driver's seat is working on the car, the youths in the passenger seats all leave one after another. Micott looks around uneasily and kicks the ground to fly at Banagher. Seeing her like this, Banagher yells, "FORGET ABOUT THAT CAR !"

"HURRY UP AND OPEN THAT DOOR!"

It's unknown if they heard it or not as the men from the Foundation aren't looking over, merely saying things like "It's stuck" and "There's a safety release for emergency use on that door." The youths are also all gathered around the door and not moving about as the blueish-white moon shines on them, causing Banagher to feel a chill. The flashing of the lights and the sounds of the explosions are much sharper than before, and the time interval between each explosion is becoming shorter. These heavy vibrations seem to happen at the same time as the heavy tremors.

This indicates that the battlefield is coming closer, and a huge profile grazes past the door on the other side, seemingly proving his intuition. That mysterious profile in the vortex-shaped clouds is the mobile suit with four wings, and on the other side of the

clouds that are sliced up is a mobile suit the size of a thumb when viewed from here. I saw that before. It's the main unit of the Federation army…the <<Jegan>>, right?

The main body that looks a lot finer than the 4 wings shoot out the thruster jet lights and adjusts its position. Banagher looks up to see the situation, and feels that he's having goosebumps. He can predict what's going to happen next—or rather, the 'killing intent'-like thing the <<Jegan>> in front of him is releasing cause him to feel this. In other words, he knows that the mobile suit is about to fire.

"GET DOWN!" He immediately shouts out and knocks into Micott, who's in front of him. He can hear Micott cry out, and just when their floating bodies are crashing into the wall, the flash and heat waves come from behind. His hair is charred, his neck feels hot and painful, and a strong heat is expanding in the wall. After a short while, a firework-sounding explosion pierces the ears, and the air that lets out a cracking sound charge over as an impact. Banagher cuddles Micott and crashes into the wall, and the recoil cause the floating body to touch the ceiling. The bodies that lose their senses of up and down take the impact. The air they breathe is hot, and a sharp pain can be felt from the head that's hit. Banagher closes his eyes and exerts more strength in his arms and he hugs Micott harder. He's being flipped by this wild hot air, and can only pray that the next pain isn't fatal.

After quite a while, the heat and the sounds of explosions vanish. Banagher can hear himself breathing frantically, and fearfully opens his eyes. He sees the illuminator that's blown into bits and scattered all over as glass, and then, about 10m away, there's the floor. Banagher realizes that he's floating near the ceiling, but the cruel situation below him cause him to stop think, and the cruel scene takes his breath away.

The lift that's attached to the door is completely melted, and the black charred mark is extended out to the partition in a straight line. The construction materials that are burnt black is still giving off smoke due to the heat, and the scalding hot air is coming from there. Banagher, who's standing there, smells the stench of ozone, and uses his sleeve that's covered with dust to cover his nose. This is a direct hit from a mega-particle cannon—that <<Jegan>> used a

beam rifle, and the stray shot hit the door. The hi-energy shot that can pierce even the armor of a mobile suit rips aside the ordinary metal like clay. The beam was too hot, and a crack's formed on the floor as it melted and cooled. It just looks no different from a hot giant snake slithering through. He can't even find a part of the limo, and nothing that can be called corpses. There's a lot of debris floating beside the door, swaying like a mirage. Nothing's moving through their own strength. The men from the Foundation, Micott' s friends, all of them vanished perfectly like a joke.

Yes, they vanished. They didn't die. Those people that I was talking to just now, those that were still breathing just disappeared suddenly. This isn't death. I won't admit that this is a way humans should die. Banagher thinks. In that case, nothing's left behind as they awaited their deaths without even feeling it. It's more like this is a wipeout instead of death. He can't summon his emotions and sentimental feelings, as what should exist are gone now—that kind of wipeout.

Suddenly, he senses someone else's smell in the ozone. This smell is similar to the smell from a hamburger kitchen, the smell of meat that's either cooked or steamed. He spits out some saliva to try and get rid of the weird stench in his nose, and focuses on Micott, who's in his clutches. Micott's still conscious, but her eyes are wide open as she looks at the catastrophe down below.

There's no response from her even as Banagher called her. Micott waves aside his arms that are shaking her and mutters, " Mario, Laila, Slyvia…" and floats towards the door. Banagher feels somewhat spooked by that monotone voice, and tries to catch up to Micott, but hears another voice and jerks his shoulders.

"Oi, are you guys alive…?" Right beside the partition that's full of cinders, Takuya carries out from the under the shadows of the passage wall and pokes his head out.

Those eyes are exceptionally bright on the thoroughly blackened face. Takuya looks over as he controls his emotions that are about to collapse. It's that protruding wall that protected Takuya from the heat waves. *He's alive. But thinking about it, I shouldn't have brought them along. It's all my fault.* The thoughts that are caught between relief and regret climbs up Banagher's heart.

"I'm still alive. What about you!?" Banagher finally manages to utter out as he sees Takuya floating over from the corner of the wall.

"I'm still alive…I am, but…" A sharp sound echoes, and Takuya's eyes seem to be attracted by the burn scar of the burn on the floor, and he doesn't even notice that Haro slipped out of his hands.

Banagher really wants to get over, but he can't just leave Micott alone. "Don't move, Micott doesn't look fine at the moment." He kicks the ceiling that's covered with cinders and float over to the melted lift. Micott's back profile looks like it will float from the door to the outside, and that will be very dangerous. "Micott!" Just when he shouted out, another flash appears above the entrance, and the explosion pushes Banagher's body back and surrounds him.

The <<Jegan>> has been firing continuous beam shots, and the diagonally-flying beams can be seen between the clouds as the

pilot flies horizontally. The mobile suit with 4 wings agilely flip sideways to dodge those beam shots, flying and closing the distance with the <<Jegan>>. As both of them meet each other, the pink beam scatter, and the <<Jegan>>'s sliced in half at the waist. Swwosh, this sound of air being sliced echoes through the colony. Banagher knows that it used a beam saber, but he doesn't understand when it was drawn or when it was sliced at all. The movements were too fast. The <<Jegan>> that's sliced in half at the waist gives off sparks and disappears on the other side of the clouds. If one looks closely, he'll notice that the beam saber in that machine's hand is sliced as well.

"Amazing…"

The difference in level is too great. This isn't just a question about the machine's ability. This instinctive conclusion surges up at Banagher, and though he feels that the blood vessels in his forehead are throbbing again in pain, but the movements the 4-winged mobile suit does next cause him to forget his pain. The 4-winged that defeated the enemy unit flies over at them.

The metal block that's about several tons is closing in, and the overwhelming mass covers the door. Just when he thinks that they 'll crash, the 4 wings hurriedly rise up, and the 20m large giant opens its wings—The jet lights of the thrusters explode in front of the door. Banagher hurriedly uses his hands to cover his face and uses his entire body to endure the hot air that's blowing over wildly.

Then, the sound of the impact that rocked the door echoes in the air. Banagher holds down Micott, who's floating to the lift, and

looks up to see the airtight wall where the metal giant with 4 large wings is at. The 4-winged machine sticks to the door that's 50m diagonally above on the left side, right at the door for ship-use, and the hidden arms within its wings open up. The 4 mechanical side arms latch onto the gap in the look and stick itself on the wall like insects. This humanoid-giant pulls out its beam saber and stabs it into the gap.

The hard and sturdy wall let out a white hot light as it melts, and the remaining beam particles that are scattered like welding sparks are scattered all over. Banagher sees this and hurriedly leaves where he is. Even if the fire's only the size of a mosquito coil , the beam particles that land can melt metal and leave a burnt black mark like the door. Banagher doesn't have time to think of what will happen if these particles land on humans and yanks Micott before trying his best to move away from the door. Banagher kicks the door several times, and Micott's hands start to move as she asks, "Banagher?" At this moment, her eyes have some life. Banagher retreats to the partition wall, and then kicks the ceiling to move to the floor.

The remains of beam particles that fall like rain cover the door, and the hot air has arrived. *It seemed that the 4-winged is trying to get to the <<Snail>>. Why is that so?* Banagher blankly feels Micott's body temperature as she continues to stick on him, and thinks, *Why? To take Audrey back? If that's the case, Audrey and Neo Zeon is—*

"OPEN THE DOOR! HURRY UP AND OPEN THE DOOR!"

Takuya seemed to have lost it too as he slams on the partition, and Haro's eyes are flashing as it floats about in the air blankly. "I

DON'T WANT, I DON'T WANT THIS! I HATE THIS!!" Banagher feels that Micott, who's screaming and cling onto him, is somewhat annoying at this point, and looks around. There're no other exits besides the partition and the access point. *Since the men from the Foundation who're holding onto the card key are gone, there's no other way to advance, is there? What should we do? Even if we retreat back to the inner wall, the lift's wrecked.*

Calm down. If you panic, you won't be able to deal with this. A voice buried deep inside his memories mutters. Banagher takes a deep breath, and the blood vessels in his forehead start to pulsate. He feels a chill up his spine. *Something's coming.* This premonition that' s like a sense of danger hits his heart and causes him to look back at the partition behind him.

The soot that's floating in the sky has become cinder as it clings onto the partition. At the center of it, a reddish-hot light is formed in a blurry manner, and immediately expands. The heat source protruding out from the partition starts to cover all the corners of the large partition. As the red heat in the center is about to become white, Banagher shouts, "TAKUYA, STOP!" and pulls him, who's slamming at the door, to the back of the wall. The melted construction materials scatter all over the place, and a gust and an exploding sound roar inside.

The sturdy partition is destroyed from the 'Snail's side by a volcanic-like explosiveness. Banagher and the rest are hidden behind the wall, curling themselves up and bracing themselves for the storm that's coming at them. The sound of thruster jets can be heard amidst the sound of twisted metal, and a large object seem to be covering them fly past them together with the storm.

Bangher waits for the heat to subside, peeks out from the wall and looks at the door. A waverider-like machine flies out from the door , and Banagher thought that it will simply spin once, but this machine immediately transforms into a humanoid shape and pulls out a beam saber.

At the same time, the Vulcan guns on the head of the machine are shooting at the 4-winged hanging on the airtight wall. The 4-winged machine stops trying to cut the door and attacks the transformable mobile suit. Both of them clash their sabers in the midst of the clouds, giving off light. Using this time, Banagher looks at the partition that has a huge hole. He's cautious as he doesn't know if there are any more machines coming in front behind, but there doesn't seem to be too many presences. The area on the other side of the crumbled partition is empty, and further on in the partition inside, there's another hole. This is an emergency mean the transformable mobile suit did to enter the colony, using its beam weapons to destroy all the particles. There's still some red-hot light on the sides of the hot, giving off hot air that seem to be able to burn the lungs. The hole is 15m in diameter, so Banagher doesn't find it hard to move through the partition without touching the crumbled parts.

The door leading to the 'Snail' is opened. Banagher swallows his saliva and doesn't think of anything else as he grabs Takuya, who seemed to be shocked, and says, "Calm down, Takuya. Haven 't you seen that kind of transformable mobile suit? What unit does it belong to?" Banagher calls him with utmost self-restrain, and Takuya's terrified expression is more or less calmed down as he answers with a trembling voice, "I, I don't know, but…"

"If it's the Zeta-type transformable mobile suits, it should belong to the Federation's Londo Bell…"

"That means a Federation's ship is at the 'Snail', right? if you can get to the dock, they'll protect you. Head over with Micott." If they move down through where the transformable mobile suit went, they will naturally reach the dock. He can't get both of them involved.

"Alright?" Banagher adds on and pushes Haro, which is floating in mid-air, back to Takuya. Takuya hurriedly catches it and regains some calm as he looks back at Banagher and asks, " What about you?"

"Audrey may be around here. I'm going to the residential area."

"NO! DON'T BREAK AWAY FROM US!" Micott, who was originally crouched down, suddenly shouted out. Banagher looks back at her in surprise and sees her teary eyes. Even though an unexpected pain reaches his heart, the command in his mind is stronger, telling him not to stop. "I'll leave it to you then, Takuya." After saying that, Banagher turns to jump off the floor and fly sideways through the hole towards the neighboring airight wall.

Banagher's hand touches the ceiling of the airtight wall, and hears Micott's hysterical scream "BANAGHER!!" from behind. *Am I being too cold?* He wonders as he continues to look forward and move on. The mobile handrail on the wall can still be used, and there should be a lift to the residential area at the airtight wall. The

environment maintenance system at the 'Snail' seems to be fine, and there's no air leaking out. *It's alright. I can go over.* Banagher mutters to himself and grabs onto the mobile handrail.

He passes through the airtight wall that's like a large tunnel, through about 5 partitions, and finally sees the gateway to the ' Snail' right in front of him. The construction materials are floating all over the place, perhaps as a result of being kicked down by the transformable mobile suit, and some of these materials are even floating to the other side of the gateway. Banagher however ignores this as he heads straight for the lift. The surroundings are really quiet, and he can only vaguely hear explosions rocking the colony far away. This situation causes Banagher to find it weird. Even if the colony builder's in a standby phase, why is it that not a single person's here with all this commotion? Banagher follows the memory of his intrusion before and tries to search for a road as he quickens his steps.

There's a lift in this place that's similar to the one in his memories, and the battery's still running. Banagher controls his anxious emotions and touches the control panel on the wall. The lift that's moving up lets out a slight electronic sound and stops in front of him. Banagher leaps into the compartment without waiting for the lift to open fully.

Immediately, a black hole that appears in front of him is holding down on him. The stinging sour stench enters his nose. *This is a muzzle.* Banagher's mind understands this, and his mind becomes blank. He's being pushed by that black muzzle as he blankly moves back.

A tall and large white man walks off the lift, and the thing he's holding and pointing at Banagher isn't a pistol, but a portable wireless speaker with the antenna modified into a muzzle. The black eyes on the bearded face are moving about, and after checking that there's nobody else around, the man points his stare and the muzzle at Banagher.

The stinging smell on the jacket floats over with the man's odor. This is the smell of gunpowder—different from the stench of ozone when a beam weapon's used. It's a smell that has more direct killing intent. *I'll be killed.* Such a thought rushes down his spine, and he, who's backed into the wall, finds that his body is all stiff now.

He's not a Federation soldier, and neither is he an employee of the Vist Foundation. He looks really lethargic and careless, but this middle-aged man is staring at him so much that he can't move. Banagher feels that he lost his strength in his lower body, which feel like they're in zero gravity, and looks back at the middle-aged man's expressionless face like a stone. Suddenly, gunshots and flashes can be heard from the lift, and the sounds of metal colliding echoes throughout the passage.

Banagher can't help but close his eyes, and as he opens his eyes again, the muzzle is gone. The bearded man kicks the floor and looks over at the other men running out of the lift. It's a man who's seemingly hurt and a blond man who's lending his shoulder for shoulder. *Are they the subordinates of this bearded man?* As Banagher wonders, the blond man's fierce gaze captures him, and the hand

holding onto the wireless speaker points it at him without hesitation. *He'll definitely fire this time!* Banagher leans his back at the wall, but at this moment…

"Leave the kid alone."

The bearded man's interrupting words causes the blond man to put down his gun. He looks like he just recovered as he looks at the bearded man, and carries his injured comrade. The bearded man follows him and grabs the mobile handrail. The men leave the lift without looking back, and soon turn at a corner and disappear. "HAVEN'T WE MADE CONTACT WITH MARIDA YET!?" An angry roar rings as it's becoming faint in the midst of the deep rumbling sounds due to the explosions.

Marida. He heard of this name before, but just can't think about how he knows about this. Banagher lets his stiff shoulder move towards the lift. The entrance is giving off sparks, and the sounds of short circuits can be heard. The lift control panel is wrecked, and from the sparks just now, it's obvious that it's due to the gunshot he heard just now.

I can't get to the residential area. As he thinks about this, his mind start to start moving, and the body that's frozen in fear start to move slowly. Banagher grabs onto his trembling hands and float about blankly in zero gravity.

Part 17

The pure white ship body of the <<Nahel Argama>> is shown on the screen, reminiscent of the Pegasus-class assault carrier.

During the One Year War, the Pegasus class ship played a pivotal role in the Federation army's mobile suit development plan, and its unique body left a huge impression on Cardeas, who had already left the army. That ship, the <<White Base>>, far exceeded battle expectations, thoroughly uprooting the old weapons and becoming a flagship that signaled the era of mobile suits.

It's been 17 years ever since then, and the <<Nahel Argama>> is entering the dock of the <<Magallanica>> together with the transformable mobile suits. *Why must you open the gateway?* Cardeas really wants to tell off the operator, but right now, there's no one else in this command console other than him. The fan-shaped operator consoles are unmanned, and half the machines have stopped. The record chips and empty pods that have changed color due to being burnt float about in zero gravity. He can see that they have frantically tried to destroy all classified documents, but he can't confirm if the operators all left safely. Most of the surveillance cameras inside the facility are down, and there's no contact with the security center. The poison called the Special Forces has spread through the <<Magallanica>>, causing it to be dysfunctional. Right now, Cardeas can't even understand what's going on in the outside world, which is just outside the door.

Right now, the only place that poison hasn't spread to is the cargo deck. The multi-surface monitor display show the <<Nahel Argama>> from many angles. Cardeas continue to spray hemostatic on his shoulder as he looks at the bridge construct that looks like a horse's head, adjusting the wireless frequency. It's at least 3km away from her to the cargo deck, but the communication status with the <<Nahel Argama>> is really bad. The camera

shows only noise, and Captain Otto Mitas' voice is rather interrupted in this noise. He can only continue to adjust the release and receiving frequency to ensure this communication frequency he finally manages to check.

"We accept this last minute inspection, but I hope that you'll take back your forces. We'll just increase the damages like this."

(A battle has started, and our side has taken huge damage. We can't retreat if we don't silence the enemy forces.)

Cardeas continues to repeat his words, and Otto continues to answer as per usual. From his voice, Cardeas feel that Otto isn't a strong-willed captain. He probably accepted this mission without even knowing exactly what the situation is, and is troubled as the situation is getting worse. He's a typical commander who's too focused on calming himself down and seeing things in a short-sighted manner.

Even if the invasion of the special forces of Londo Bell can't be helped, but if it's not because of her being in his hands, the ' Sleeves' won't have such a strong reaction. Right now, the situation is such that both parties have become victims out of coincidence. But the current situation now doesn't allow for him to explain. At this moment, the members of the <<Magallanica>> are either being slaughtered, or the number of victims in the colony continues to increase. It's not that the mobile suit of the 'Sleeves' is running riot, but that the Federation pilots who aren't used to actual combat expanded the battlefield and caused this to happen. He can understand this from the words of the commander Otto.

"Then, please at least let the Special Forces slaughtering their way through the <<Magallanica>> to fall back. This is the starting point of the UC project. Don't forget, most of the people here are either civilian technicians or researchers."

(But, Neo Zeon now…)

"Captain, I know that this is a correct decision militarily, but this mission includes a high level of political problem. You may have to bear responsibility based on your own decision. I want to speak to the Anaheim employee with you."

First, accept the enemy's proposal and standpoint, and then say out threatening words from an observer's standpoint, and finally, state a request which the other party won't feel that they're at a loss; this is just an initial skill in starting negotiations, but it's enough to bait Otto. Cardeas face the silent communication panel and asks, "Are you there?"

"Just tell him that Cardeas Vist wants to speak with him. This should be enough to control the situation."

If Martha's behind this mission, she will definitely send escorts. Anaheim Electronics belong to that woman, so which employee will it be? Cardeas recalls many names and faces, and at this moment, Otto answers, (But they're already—) Before he can finish , the communication's dead.

It's not because of the Minovsky particles, but because the power's down, causing the communication panel to be dead. *They're here?* Cardeas closes his eyes and takes a deep breath. He takes

out the pistol in his pants' pocket, puts his hand on the controls and slowly looks behind. He sees several men wielding recoilless rifles, and the men in normal suits land silently on the floor behind the chairman's seat.

From the smooth movements, he can tell that they're well-trained soldiers, but the normal suits they're wearing are the ones used by employees. Cardeas thought that the Special Forces will be here, and looks somewhat shocked as he stares at the intruders' faces. These men are all wearing visors to cover their faces, so it's impossible to see who they are. Cardeas' stares at these people that aren't moving, reaches his hand behind him, and another person lands in the middle fo the group.

He has a pistol on his waist, but his hands aren't holding onto a rifle. With the other people watching, that normal suit walks towards Cardeas and opens the visor on the helmet. Immediately, Cardeas understands what's going on, and forgets that he has a pistol behind him.

"It's you…"

There's nothing else to talk about. The normal suit in front of him remain sill, just staring straight at Cardeas.

Part 18

Banagher feels an explosion in the air, and the construction materials that immediately melt and crumble let out a heavy

sound. The dock itself just looks like it got electrocute as it trembles, and the hot air that blows from time to time causes Banagher to be unable to stand still.

The large amount of shrapnel that's blown over by the explosive pressure slam into the reinforced steel structure, and the deep sounds of cars colliding can be heard. *Is there a fire?* He can see the silhouette of a crane in the slightly crimson red flame, lighting the conveyer belts that are all criss-crossed. However, the lights themselves aren't enough to illuminate the entire factory. Banagher steps on the metal board that floats beside his feet, grabs onto the steel structure beside him. He still can't tell whether the entrance has any stray shots, and if he float around randomly, he will be pancaked by the flying metal scraps due to the explosions.

He continues to move through the 'Snail' to try and find a lift that can be used, and accidentally arrives at the construction block where the materials for building the colony are refined. This fully automated factory can purify and reprocess the debris from space that's floating around before sending it over to the 'Wheel'. But right now, all operations have ceased, and the night lights are the only things around. This factory that's filled with mini mobile suits and small working launchers is really large, and no matter how far he walks, it's like he hasn't touched anything that resembles a wall . The floor and ceiling can't be seen from here, and the flames are swaying far away, lighting the reinforced metal skeleton that's like a ghost.

It's like a scene in a nightmare. Banagher's driven by the fear stuck in his throat and tightly grabs onto the metal frame. He can't stop trembling ever since that bearded man pointed at him with a gun.

The impulse in his heart has calmed down too, and he's feeling anxious, thinking that he might not be able to leave this place forever. Banagher grabs onto those objects that feel more like walls , and tell himself that he can definitely find the exit as long as he heads down the wall. If he moves through the construction area and passes through the fire, he should be able to reach the port. Over there, he might be able to meet up with Takuya and Micott, and he'll definitely find a way to get to the residential area.

Really? He ignores this weak questioning in his heart, and as he turns his tense neck, something white seems to move by his eyes. It 's the normal suit of a worker, a human. The thing that floats here with the debris has its back on Banagher and floats off from him. Banagher immediately thinks of that bearded man he just saw, kicks the structure and floats over to the normal suit.

I just want to see that guy's face no matter who he is. I want to talk; I want to see if I'm mentally normal. "The guy over there!" Banagher yells out and grabs the normal suit while almost knocking into him . But on see the front, he's speechless. The visor of the helmet is shattered, and black liquid's flowing out.

The chest has a hole the size of a thumb. The blood that seeps out from it is covered with a sooty surface. Banagher accidentally sees the inside of the helmet that's battered into a blob of blood, and immediately let go of the hand of the normal suit frantically. The shattered visor let out blood, creating a sound that sound like a plastic bag being stepped on.

It sounds like vomiting. This is a blood bag in the shape of a normal suit, a slab of meat where its already hard to identify

where the mouth is, giving off a clear vomiting sound. Banagher screamed and kicked the normal suit aside, using the momentum to move his body backwards and instinctively grabs onto the frame of the conveyer belt beside him to steady himself. *I can't stay here. I have to get out of here.* He doesn't even know where to go as he lets the completely spine-chilling body float in the midst of the dark void.

The countless floating objects and the scraps that may be mixed in with flesh pass by under the night lights. There's a burnt smell in the air, and the hot air coming at his face is becoming stronger and stronger. Banagher can sense the steamed meat-like stench and the sounds of vomits, and he feels that his relatively intact sanity is being corroded bit by bit. He moves his limbs and heads towards the flames. He doesn't want to die; he doesn't want to let himself think that humans die like that. His mother's death was a lot more dignified in the sense that at least her body wasn't floating around like wastage and showing an ugly state of giving off gas that's accumulated inside. He can't feel sad or even mourn for them, and will just naturally feel disgusted.

Unlike animals, who only distinguish life and death through their instincts, humans have to comply with the etiquettes of life and death. Humans have to use the possibilities within to show the world the power and kindness that belong to them. This is building a civilization, a duty those people who entered space has to bear responsibility for. *In the end, humans are animals too.* Such reasoning is an excuse the people living in space can't accept—*unexpected words appear within his memories, and as the blood vessels in his forehead throb, a beam shot's scar appear in his eyes, still piping hot.*

There's a hole 5m wide on the thick wall behind the floating fuel and the floating cables. I can get through. *Banagher firmly believes without proof as he holds his breath and kicks the twisted metal frame.*

At the same time, he closes his eyes and uses his arms to protect his head. The burning sensation on the skin immediately moves behind, and the cool air surrounds him. The silence around him hurts his eyes, and even though he knows that the surroundings have changed, he doesn't have the courage to open his eyes and check the situation. It should be the dock if he gets by the wall, but the surroundings are way too quiet. Perhaps he may have gone the wrong way, and he'll be sucked by vacuum. Banagher doesn't dare to exhale even once as he floats in the unknown space. A deep sound suddenly rings, and a strong flash of light appears.

The same sounds and lights continue on, lighting the space that' s covered in darkness. Banagher opens his eyes and peeps through the gap to look around. He sees many white lights on the ceiling high above, and there are lights from the bottom too. These lights that are intersecting each other are all gathered at the construct in the middle of the space. It is 20m tall and about 6m wide, and it looks like a building under construction from the metal frame and the beams that form the outside.

There're no signs of anyone around, and there's not even a single wall on the four walls. There's a large handling port gateway on one of the walls, but it's tightly shut, and the airlocks are also sealed up. Is it a storeroom or a workshop? *No, this is really an unnatural isolation. It can probably be called a private room.* Banagher thinks.

This sealed room that's 30m wide on each side and can be called a cubic room is completely empty—and right in the middle, there's a construct that's like a building and him, an anomaly. Banagher looks around with his eyes that are already used to the light, looks at the hole he used to enter, and then turn to look at the construct standing right in the middle of the room. He pass by the metal frames and turns to the front where the lights are gathered. The construct that looks to be about 6,7 storey tall is hollow inside, and it's holding some sort of a machine.

"This is…"

He can't help but let out his hoarse voice, and then shuts his mouth again. The pure white armor is basked under the lights, showing the humanoid shape of a mobile suit. There's a translucent visor at roughly where the eyes are, and there's a protruding long horn on the forehead—

That's right; this is the white mobile suit he saw from the subway window this morning. Banagher's body floats with the momentum and hits the handrail, and can feel a slight impact on his back as he looks at the giant in front of him blankly. The humanoid-shaped machine that seemed to be a sign for the abnormalities happening yesterday is held in place by a box-shaped container cage, and the giant that occupies his line of sight entirely is standing there.

Looking closely, he can see that there are armored joints on the pure white surface, covering its entire body like circuits. It has steel cables dangling all over it, and it looks to be ready to be sent off for packing. What's weird is the object that's like a large metal

wheel binding the limbs. This sturdy metal rings that binds the elbows, wrists, knees and feet are held in place in the sturdy ring. It'll be too ridiculous to call it a seal for transport. It's like someone 's scared that it will suddenly go violent and sealed it up.

The cockpit at the abdomen is opened, and as he bends down, he can see that the cockpit door's opened. The giant is sealed inside the sealed room—the numerous sculptures and old tapestries of the legendary beast in the Vist's mansion; these factors seem to come together as Banagher feels an ominous presence. He swallows his saliva and look at the airlock beside the wall. He guesses by the direction that the port's on the other side once he gets over. *Maybe I can even unlock it from inside; I really don't want to stay here anymore.* Banagher's being driven by such emotions as he intends to kick the handrail of the passage he just passed through, and he then sees a vinyl sheet that's used to cover a mobile suit floating in front of him.

The vinyl sheet's blocked by the frame, but it continues to slowly fly to the hole in the wall where the air's moving to. Banagher feels a chill as he sees the dust under the lights flow to a certain spot, and looks around.

"Is the air leaking?"

This isn't an air flow caused by a ventilation unit. There's a hole leading to the outside wall. The air of the 'Snail' is gradually moving out, and Banagher has to get a normal suit even if he wants to get to the port or the residential area. He looks at the large sealed room and checks the types of warning. A red light's lit up, indicating that the firefighting apparatus are here, but there're

no green lights, which indicate where the normal suits are in emergency situations, to be found. The firefighting apparatus should have an OBA but it's useless when this place is full of vacuum.

There should be a changing room outside the airlock, but he can 't be certain about whether there's vacuum there. Banagher floats about weakly in the sealed room and turns to look at the abdomen of the giant, at the black hole that seems like it will suck him in—

"If it's a mobile suit cockpit, there should be a normal suit prepared somewhere…"

If possible, he doesn't want to go near it, but it can't be helped. Banagher kicks the handrail and flies over to the giant. He grabs onto the cockpit cover to slow himself down, and use the momentum to get in.

The air's filled with the scent of heated electric cables, and the all-view screen isn't activated. There's only the many screens sticking to the inside of the sphere-shaped inner wall, lying motionlessly in the darkness. The seat's being supported by a linear support, and it looks like it's floating in the middle of the cockpit. The pedal that's built together with the chair and the control joysticks look very similar to the <<Jegan>> he saw in a practical in Anaheim Electronics. However, the standard-looking linear seat has a unique equipment above it, giving off a unique glow.

The frame looks like it will occupy the whole of the pilot's head as it's poked out from the chair in such a way that the pilot's view

won't be obstructed. There are mechanical arms on both left and right sides to steady the head. One will associate this with a torture tool just by looking at it, but there's no other place to put them in this narrow cockpit. Banagher sits on the linear seat and moves the mobile display monitor to the front. The orange activation light is glowing, indicating that it's in a standby phase.

"It's still working…"

He presses the activation switch under the lights button, and a deep buzzing sound echoes throughout the cockpit. The all-view screen isn't activated yet, but three screens are all lit, and the system start to scan. The side-monitor display on the left shows all sorts of power output indicators. The speedometer, distance meter are all being showing one by one. Its basic controls are just like a mini-mobile suit, but the output of the power and the indicators are all way higher.

The giant starts to wake up slowly, and its breathing reaches Banagher as a tremor. It's different from the mini-mobile suit that's for civilian use. This thing is a weapon, a hi-tech machine he never saw before, a real mobile suit—Banagher's heart is feeling uneasy for some reason as he understands this, causing him to feel jumpy as he leans back on the hard-backed seat. Banagher looks around the inside of the cockpit that's lit up to look for any spare normal suits. This kind of cockpit should have its spares behind the display monitor. Banagher uses his fingers to feel his way through the gaps of the monitor, and he intends to reach out under the linear seat, but hears noise coming in from the speakers inside the cockpit.

The side-screen on the right shows a communication window, and static's showing on it. At a corner of the screen, the words ' Engine Sector 24. Passage 3'. Perhaps it connected automatically as I seemed to have linked up with the communication speakers inside the 'Snail'. Banagher thinks that he may be able to get information on what's going on inside the colony, and touches the monitor to try and switch the channel frequency.

Material transport room, cargo deck, computer room, canteen; everywhere's just showing static, and the sounds just sound noisy. *Is it because of the Minovsky Particles' effect, or that the devices are wrecked?* Banagher has to give up, and can only turn his eyes away from the monitor, but a person's voice suddenly stuns him.

(So Martha instigated you…I understand.)

It's a man's voice, and he heard of it before. Banagher stares at the monitor that's still full of static that indicates that the area is the 'Command Console' and diverts his focus to listen to the voice coming through. (You intended…to make use of the army…but you're the ones being made use of…huh?) This voice that's filled with some anger continues on, and Banagher immediately associates it with the arrogant sounding 'You risked yourself too much.' he heard just now.

(The Federation wants to get the <<Laplace Box>>, and the chance is right in front of them…then…do you think…they're thinking about the Foundation's welfare…?)

He can't hear the voices of the person he's talking to, but Banagher understands that the one talking now is Cardeas Vist. "

Laplace, Box?" He subconsciously repeats these words. He feels that he heard of this before, but just can't remember when and where he did.

(That's why…you're not thinking enough. If this continues, Neo Zeon will be vanquished, and the Federation will continue its dominion, but what next? Humanity's enemies are just real aliens then, and the army will lose its value…in this case, Anaheim and the Foundation will wilt.)

It's just like what that man in a high and mighty position will say. Even though he doesn't know who Cardeas' talking to, Banagher understands that his words mean that they're using war as business—the theory death merchants apply to, and from his tone, it seem that the relationship between the Vist Foundation and Anaheim Electronics is a lot more complicated than what the rumors indicate.

They're talking about something horrifying. Another war will start again. Audrey's pressing expression appears in front of Banagher, and just when he intends to increase the volume, (and for this, you…), Cardeas' voice is interrupted again. After a while, the deep voice rings, (Stop it, you'll regret this.), causing Banagher to feel cold.

Killing intent can be heard from the noise, and Banagher feels that Cardeas' holding back his anxious breathing as his enemy is getting anxious while intending to do something. (You're just being used by Martha, you…) Cardeas groans, and Banagher inadvertently jumps up as the ample killing intent explode as sounds.

BAM! BAM! The sharp sounds of breaking can be heard. (DON' T LET HIM GET AWAY!) This voice that seem to belong to someone echoes through the wireless speaker. Banagher 's stiff hands are grabbing the display monitor as he continues to stare at the noise on the window. Cardeas' voice has vanished as noise suddenly explode through the inside of the cockpit.

Part 19

The flash occurs, a heavy sound of impact strikes from above, and the gust that nearly blows the bodies away strike the pipes that are intertwined. Audrey grabs onto a supporting pipe and prevents her body from being blown away in this zero gravity environment.

It's been 30 minutes since she passed through the forest in the residential area and took the lift out to the Industrial block. During this time, the sounds of battle get more and more intense, and she can even hear explosions inside the colony. However, the explosions just now aren't just as simple as being straw shots. Audrey opens her tightly closed eyes as she arrives opposite the refinery plants, and looks up. 200m away, the gate's shooting out fireballs, and as the black smoke scatters, she sees the profile of the mobile suit.

The heavy humanoid-shaped machine has 4 binders. It leaps out of the gate, accelerates and enters the Industrial block. It's the <<Kshatriya>>. The center axis of the rotating residential area, the Industrial block that passes through the center of the 'Snail's shell is very wide, and it has at least 300m of space, but that's too many

obstacles for a flying mobile suit. The <<Kshatriya>>'s immediately tangled by the conveyer belts that block its eye, and in the midst of the dim light, sparks are flying due to contact friction. However, the several-ton machine's inertia isn't eliminated so easily. Its moss green body crush the conveyor belts in the air that look like a spider web altogether as it slowly flies through the air of the Industrial block. The monoeye on the head is looking around, and looks over at the inner wall that's buried by a plant.

"Marida…is she looking for me?"

If not, there's no reason for her to enter the colony builder that is hard to move around. Audrey thinks of the side of Marida's face while Marida's concentrating on piloting, and looks around, using her thoughts to tell Marida her location. The Minovsky particles are still effective, but the distance of 200m is still within the range of the sensor. However, it's hard to look within the plant from the air. In this situation, she can't depend on Marida to 'sense' her. Audrey's intending to float to the building that looks like an office, but a sudden shot and boom that appears causes her to stop.

A strong gust of wind blows by, and a Federation mobile suit flies by low at a height of less than 20m. The <<Kshatriya>> shoots out the movement thrusters, and quickly dodges the Vulcan cannons that grazes by the mobile suit's head before pulling out the beam saber. Both sides' beam sabers clash, and just as the two giants are entering a sword battle, another incoming Federation unit rushes at the back of the <<Kshatriya>>. The

humanoid-shaped Federation unit that's closer swings its beam saber at the <<Kshatriya>>, and Audrey shouts out, "MARIDA…!"

The Federation unit uses its beam saber to slash at the <<Kshatriya>>, and at that moment, the 2 binders at the back of the <<Kshatriya>> open and draw out the beam sabers hidden inside. The Federation unit that attacks from behind has its beam saber blocked by the particle sabers that are intertwined. Audrey's eyes see the <<Kshatriya>> blocks the enemies from both front and back. The flashes light up the Industrial block, and the hidden arms behind slice the enemy behind with a blur. The Federation unit with its shoulders sliced off fall, and the medium blue body collapse into the plants on the inner wall.

BOOM. A deep sound rocks the colony. The flames of the explosion continue to expand down the pipes. The gust again strikes, and Audrey's blown away by more than 10m before she can even grab onto something. Audrey sees that she's about to crash into the liquid tank in her line of sight frantically uses her hands to hook herself onto a metal triangular structure. Suddenly, a ball the size of a football flies by her, and the sound of something knocking into the tank can be heard.

The ball bounces back. It flaps its two discs that look like ears, and the optical sensors inside the ball-shaped object flash. "You're …!" The reason why she's calling it as a person is because she remembers the tone of the owner who treated it as a friend. This robot used to be a mascot that trended before. *This thing is called Haro, right?* Audrey steps off the frame and grabs the Haro floating in the air with both hands.

Audrey watches it flashes its eyes and say in a monotonous tone , (Hello, Audrey.), and this cause her heart to race. *Is that boy here?* She wants to look around to understand the situation, but she, who's choking from the smoke floating over, hears someone talking to her, "Don't stay in such a place!" causing her to panic and look up.

Banagher. She nearly calls out, but immediately swallows her words. The profile closing in through the smoke isn't the owner of this Haro. The age and attire is the same, but the slightly curled tea-colored hair and the Eastern-looking face is different from Banagher's. Just as she's wondering, another person floats over, and Audrey, who's completely defenseless, has a sense of danger.

The black-haired girl who looks to be of the same age is hiding behind the office building together with the boy, "HURRY UP!" Haro, who's in Audrey's hands, flaps its ears as its eyes flash, shouting, (Takuya, Micott) Audrey looks over at them as she holds onto the metal frame. The two people who are waving over from 10m away don't look like employees of the Vist Foundation or soldiers. But since she's basically in enemy territory, Audrey thinks that she can't just follow people and tries to look for a chance to escape. Suddenly, an explosive flash and sound that's a lot stronger than before happens.

The other Federation unit got taken down. The incoming hot wind blows between the gap between the plants, and Audrey carries Haro at her chest before grabbing onto the frame. The

flying shrapnel stab into the liquid tank, and an explosion can be heard. The flames expand out, and Audrey sees that the cinders of the fire are flying at her.

There's no place to hide, and she can't hide. Audrey holds onto Haro tightly as her eyes move away from the cinders flying at her. *I'll die.*—the unrealistic feeling words cause her entire body to go numb for a moment, and she feels that a giant object flies over her.

The large amount of cinder shrapnel bounce off the metal, letting out a deafening rumble. Audrey, who feels that the heat's a lot weaker than before, turns her cringing neck behind. She sees a large hand, which has five fingers like a human's actuator, and also the handheld armaments connector. The hand and the medium-blue metallic arm are attached as they form a dam that successfully block the shrapnel and the heat in front of Audrey's eyes.

The head has a visor that's used to cover the eyes of the mobile suit's inorganic face. Audrey sees the serial number on the machine being NAR-008 and sees that this is a Federation's unit. She isn't able to even gasp as her body freezes. She wants to immediately get away, but the cockpit at the abdomen opens, and the pilot asks "Are you hurt?" causing her to lose the chance to escape.

The pilot who probes his body out from the cockpit shows a shocked expression as he pulls his chin back. The helmet visor is opened, and a young man's face appears, "Kids too for that matter …! What are you doing here!?" The teenager angrily chides Audrey, and she doesn't answer as she looks back. At this moment

, the boy and girl hiding at the office building floats over. “We escaped here because there’s a hole in the colony!” The girl shouts back. “Is…is that so? Wait!” The pilot answers, and enters the cockpit. From his actions and expression, it looks like he’s still not used to actual combat. Audrey concludes as she moves to the mobile suit’s arm that has a shield equipped and checks the situation. The explosions are still going on, and the flames are slowly spreading throughout the colony. There’s no sign of the << Kshatriya>> in the air, so it seem that it moved to another block. The smoke continues to get thicker, and the eyes and throat are feeling irritated.

“Ordinary civilians. There’re kids at the port…understood.” The boy and girl look at the cockpit with their ash-riddled faces as they hear the interrupted voice of the pilot. The boy has a dark blue jacket with the logo of Anaheim Electronics. Audrey remembers that this is the same jacket as the kind Banagher wore, and says, “Well…” The boy and girl hear her and turn around. Just when Audrey thinks that this is bad, the black-haired girl is staring at her,

“Don’t tell me you’re…” The girl’s interrupted by the sudden activation sound of the actuator, and the mobile suit arm that was acting as a dam shield moves and flips its palm up. Audrey hears the pilot say “Hurry up and get on”, and her grip onto Haro is stronger now.

“It’s dangerous here. Let me bring you to our ship.”

The boy and the girl seem to heave a sigh of relief once they hear this. The boy steps off the floor first and floats to the palm of

the mobile suit. He touches the armor covering the fingers and says, “It’s a little hot, but there’s no problems. Hurry up.” The girl hears the boy’s words and nods her head as she pushes Audrey’s back. “Well, I…” “Talk later. You’ll die if you stay here.” Audrey’s words are interrupted by the girl’s words quickly, and just like that, she’s taken to the hand of the mobile suit.

The ignition continues to echo, and the hot air blows at the ash-riddled hair. In zero gravity, the air won’t weigh differently because of the heat, so there’s no convection. The flames will extinguish once they use up the surrounding oxygen, so the burning shouldn’t remain for long. However, the collapse of the neighboring wall cause the air to flow, and the ‘wind’ will promote the burning and continue to make things worse. The automatic fire extinguishing facility is activated as sprinklers are spurting out water, but this will continue cause the water to become steam. The flames will only continue to spread throughout the plant, and they won’t be extinguished until they burn off all the oxygen. *You’ll die if you stay here…*Audrey regurgitates the words the girl said, and suppresses that feeling that she’s going to take a fatal step as she moves towards the finger of the mobile suit that’s as thick as a tree branch.

The armor that has some of the machine’s heat is hotter than expected. The left hand of the mobile suit is carrying 3 teenagers, and the machine gets up from a kneeling position. It slowly activates its thrusters, and the unit with the thruster pack behind slowly leaves the ground. *I just accepted protection from a Federation mobile suit*—Audrey’s unable to consider the significance and weight of this action as she looks at the flames in front of her, moving further and further away.

Part 20

"I don't deny that you managed to build the Foundation in one generation, but times are changing."

On the other side of the door that's slightly ajar, the light of the sunset and his father's voice came from there. That sunset was as beautiful as rouge, a crimson red sunset that was like fresh blood. Yes, at that time, the Vist's mansion was still on the ground… Cardeas recalls that under that real sky, when they're basked under the real sun, his grandfather was sitting at the office in the west block of the building—the healthy and strong Syam Vist will often look outside the window with hesitant looks.

"No matter what you say, I don't intend to hand the <<Laplace Box>> over to the Federation. The Foundation will be doomed once we hand that thing out. You're to be the next head of this family, and yet you don't know that?"

Syam's steady voice has some anger in this. This is a dream. Cardeas, who realizes this, continues to listen to this quarrel between his grandfather and his father. He's standing outside the office, becoming one with the 18-year-old him who peeked in. His father, who hardly comes home, will often start arguing with his grandfather. At that point, Cardeas had no interest in managing the Foundation at all, whole-heartedly thinking about how he's to get away from these. To Cardeas at that point, this was a problem he had to handle.

Once he graduated from high school, he didn't want to enter college. He wanted to go out and sightsee, to take care of himself, and roam around the way. He knew what he could do and what he couldn't do. Ever since young, he was forced to enter a prestigious boarding school, and was forced to walk down a paved path. He remembers his own frustrations and melancholy he had when he was young, and stood in front of the office of this grandfather he always respected. The reason why he chose to visit when his father was around was because he wanted to avoid the hassle of saying the same things twice, and also, his personality wished that he could handle this thing the elders couldn't handle. Unlike the overly-serious father of his, the seasoned but smart grandfather will definitely stand on his side. That's what Cardeas intended.

"What you said is outdated. The Foundation can still hang on even without the 'box'. Or rather, because of the box, the Foundation can't take a step forward."

"Whose view is that? The Immigration Council?"

"Mine, father. I can think too."

Father. Cardeas' impression was that this was the first and last time his father called his grandfather as such. The awareness that this is a dream becomes faint, and Cardeas listens to their conversation intently. His father and grandfather want to step past that line they can't get across. And even as family—no, it's because they're family—that they take the one step that has no turning back. Even though he was only an 18-year-old brat back then, he

was scared as he felt this. The mansion that he lived in ever since young became chilly.

"During the past 20 years, I expanded the Foundation through my own means, and I am proud of my own results. But you think that this result is due to the 'box'…"

"I never said that. You have the awareness to grasp the idea of when the trend is going on, which is why I nominated you to be the next head. But even though running this Foundation requires such awareness, it can't be used as the premise to start things."

"As you so hoped, I continued to restrain myself in order to answer your wishes. So what in the world are you still hoping for? When are you going to hand that thing over to me…! Sleeping in that uncomfortable freezer all day; do you intend to control the Foundation forever?"

"Once I find someone worthy enough to hand the 'box' over, I'll die immediately. However, that person's not you."

Even though it's just said in the spur of the moment, Cardeas knew that his grandfather said something decisive. After a short moment, his father's voice was trembling, "You're really straightforward there…"

"Then, our relationship as father and son is over. I'll use that ' box' you got accidentally to stabilize the Foundation, and I'll learn from your will to live and try my best to get what I need."

"You're already mentally prepared when you say this, are you?"

"Do you think I'm joking?"

"No…it's just that as a father, I hoped that you'll take action without talking. Or else you'll regret it."

Cardeas thought that the so-called words piercing the heart referred to such a thing. The despair was shown through words, bringing a cutting ability that would never be matched. It's not hard to imagine what the person who heard that will feel.

"…Even this me doesn't have just one person's expectations. The Foundation I and them look forward to is different from yours. Don't forget that."

Cardeas felt that his father said too much. Even though this was still the lowest level of arguing for the person involved, there was too much information revealed. It would be enough to just say the following sentence if he wanted to leave that place.

"You're really a lonely man."

With this, his father walked out of his grandfather's office. Cardeas, who was standing in front of the door, couldn't find a chance to hide and froze. His father was slightly shocked to see him, and then wordlessly passed by him. On the other side of the door, his grandfather's profile was looking over with the shadow of the sunset draped over, and those eyes of him seemed like they

wanted to tell something. However, Cardeas didn't have the courage to enter the room. The door closed quickly, and the lone shadow in the sunset remained in Cardeas' stare.

At that time, if father said something—no, if he had just put his hand on my shoulder, if he had only shown even the tiniest bit of concern to his son, future developments may have been different. Cardeas thought. However, his father remained silent, never met anyone at home even at night, and went back to work as if he was running away. He was doing this because he didn't want his wife to worry…or maybe not. His father was merely looking at himself, looking at his own pitiful state of being abandoned by his grandfather. In the end, this was all because of his father's limits as a man, and was the biggest reason why his grandfather never handed everything over to him.

Cardeas lost his strength to continue discussing about the future and went back to school. He heard of his father's death 3 months later. There wasn't anything suspicious, and he died because of an unfortunate car accident—that's what the police and the news reported. In fact, some people in the Vist Foundation knew that it wasn't the case, and of course, Cardeas was one of them.

Cardeas learnt later on that his father was instigated by some Federation government senators and bureaucrats that he had strong relationships with, and really intended to launch something like a coup to get the Foundation. 50 years passed since the Universal Century started, and the difference in wealth between the Earth residents and the spacenoids was obvious. The space migration plans had shown some clues of abandoning the residents, which will of course cause the spacenoids'

dissatisfaction to increase. Spacenoids all over the place continue to demand for independence, and the Federation was fearful that the <<Laplace Box>> would land in their hands—especially the faction of the political philosopher Zeon Zum Deikun, who attracted the attention of the spacenoids by promoting Side-ism—and his father must have been swallowed by this huge monster called the Federation government when he was trying to develop the Foundation. He was trapped, unable to break away, and walked down the path of no return.

It's possible to make a huge commotion over his father's death, but the people that could do it chose to remain silent. They just viewed his father as someone who could convince his grandfather, and once they saw that his grandfather rejected his father cruelly, they didn't have any ability to continue negotiating. Cardeas hated those people who came to his father's funeral with vague expressions, and it may be a lot easier to hate his grandfather. However, Cardeas saw that his grandfather seemed to age a lot once his father died, and couldn't hate him at all. On the other hand, he couldn't forgive him easily; and so, he chose to keep his distance away from the family and carry out his own plan without permission. He was looking for strength that could crush a frozen heart and fight against the cruel world. In the end, the Earth Federation's army became a one-time stop for Cardeas.

Cardeas learnt there that for hardworking people, there are two categories to them. One is the kind that will do anything to gain recognition; and the other is the kind that will see whether he will accomplish things and got other people's recognition as a result. The former is about getting the praise of other people, and loses decisiveness in important situations. In contrast, the latter have

their targets set in front, and won't be distracted by the situation in front of them or the conscience, and will not hesitate when making decisions.

If his father was the former, his grandfather was the latter. Leaving aside his own feelings for his own grandfather, Cardeas himself worked hard to be the latter. His father always aimed to get his grandfather's appraisal, and until the end, was his grandfather's tool. One could even say that he was forever a kid. *One shouldn't be walking down the same path as this world isn't so caring to kids, let alone let them live on as kids. He has to work hard for his own sake and not look for others to repay him; and he should remember this heartily and do what he had to do. If he couldn't be completely independent, an end where he would be discarded once he's used would be waiting for him. If that really happened, he would be vengeful over being unable to feel love and praise, and will continue to curse the world before dying.*

To be a man. This belief cause the 18-year-old youth to shed his appearance as a teenager as he faced the dry outside world. After more than 10 years, Cardeas became someone suitable in his grandfather's eyes, and at this point, he returned back to the Vist Foundation. The 30 years that passed next was really fast, like instant. He lost a lot of things, and there were a lot of things he couldn't protect. But even if others don't know this, he did.

Perhaps this way of living is really lonely, perhaps life's just a game of bluff. Cardeas, who used his own body to take the bullet from a relative of his—and the closest one at that, proved that he was just a member of a cursed family, and thought coldly in heart. *Was grandfather's careless for letting father betray him? Is it because he*

lacked a heart to think for the weak that he demanded so much from himself? Or he had to use this forced view to protect himself? If he didn't do so, he will be crushed. From that viewpoint, that will make him a delicate and weak person.

That's why he dreamt. He dreamt of finding someone he could hand the <<Laplace Box>> over to and hoped to get back the promised future. He harbored such a naïve thought and bet his entire life on it. And he asked me, who's walking down the same path as me: Can you forgive me?

Was that really Syam Vist who would never look for other people's appraisal? However, Cardeas, who's about to meet his end, will soon experience the dissatisfaction of life. Humans will give birth and entrust their funerals to their children. His grandfather, who had to endure the greatest pain of killing his own son and yet get the recognition from his grandson, should be a happy man.

But I have nothing. A relative to ask for forgiveness, someone who can redeem me, someone who I can entrust…I have nothing. I'm lonely. Cardeas thought. *Lonely, helplessly lonely…*

The words that were said subconsciously came out from the hole in his abdomen, forming a trail of blood floating in zero gravity. Cardeas feels that the heat on his burning skin is becoming weaker , and groggily awakes to see fire in his sights.

All the refinery plants were burned, and the fire cause the inner walls of the factory to become rouge in color. That light was similar to the sunset he saw in his dream. This rouge light that

seemed to burn all of the family's works, including his father and grandfather's, blackens the inside of the <<Magallanica>>, swallowing the mobile suits' remains lying in the fire and burning everything to dust.

His own body will soon become one of the floating objects and get swallowed by the fire. Cardeas already lost a lot of blood ever since he was shot in the command console room and got here, and can be said to be dying. Soon after, this slightly dormant fire will likely burn even wilder, but there's something he has to do. Cardeas uses his numb leg to kick the wall and fly to the safety area of the container deck.

He leans on the airlock and uses his blood-stained hand to press on the palmprint identification panel and look at the iris recognition installation to unlock the door, which in turns swings open. From the way things operate normally, the special forces probably haven't found this way, but this means that Gael didn't manage to destroy the classified stuff. Cardeas feels a pain in his heart that's different from the one on his own body. *Gael didn't manage to make it here…*

In that case, I can only do it myself. Cardeas pass through the airlock and enter the safety area in front of the gas chamber. In this large and completely sealed space, the unharmed white body of that <<Unicorn>> enters his eyes.

This mobile suit is created out of the Universal Century plan, which in turn is part of the Federation's reorganization plan, and it bears the mission of being the guide to the <<Laplace Box>>. Cardeas use his hand to wipe his somewhat blurry eyes as he look

at the machine that symbolizes the beast of possibilities. At this moment, he notices a stinging stench and frowns. It wasn't an imagination as this safety area is really becoming smoky. There's a hole in a certain corner in the next room, causing the smoke from the factory to enter here. Cardeas looks around, sees that it's getting smokier, realizes it's a bad sign, and leaps up to the pilot seat of the <<Unicorn>>.

Since there's an access point, it's not weird for the Special Forces to be here anytime. He has to erase the Laplace OS script on the machine and also try as much as possible to destroy anything related to NT-D here. Cardeas is really hurt by the fact that he has to destroy this thing without it being used once, but he can't let the key to opening the <<Laplace Box>> enter the Federation government's hands. Cardeas look up at the corner with the NT-D sensor, and then looks at the cockpit at the abdomen. The sound of something breaking can be heard behind him, and a hot gust of wind that blows over covers him.

They're flames coming from the airlock. The flames climb up the wall, melting the metal frames, and Cardeas, who's slammed to the wall, sees the debris that's spewing out. He bites his lower lip, feeling regret instead of fear. He hasn't dealt with the secrets of the <<Unicorn>>, yet the long-cherished wish of the family is going to be exposed as he dies off.

He has no kin he can ask for forgiveness, and has no god that he can pray for help. He will only be burned to death with anger and regret—Cardeas watches the debris flying over and wants to curse out loud, but at this moment, something seem to knock into him from the side and send him flying.

His body's slammed aside into the wall, and he's then pulled back to the container area with the <<Unicorn>>. Cardeas watches the surging flames below his feet, and his body embraces the impact of the debris that's stabbed into the wall. At this moment, he touches the arms that are grabbing him from behind, and once inside the container area, the arm releases itself. The arms release once they enter a corner of the container, and a hand moves in front and grabs Cardeas' hand tightly. That person kicks the wall on the container, and Cardeas moves over to the cockpit of the << Unicorn>>. Cardeas notices the side of that person's face and feels that his hand is losing strength.

"PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!"

Banagher Links yells as he grabs the hand that's about to be released. Is this a dream? After blinking a while, Cardeas grabs Banagher's hand again and checks the touch of that youthful skin. *It's good even if it's a dream.* He thought. If he can dream in the end, there's still value in his life. To think that he, who's hurt by his own kin, will be saved by 'another'…

However, the sensation of reality becomes stronger as he approaches the cockpit of the <<Unicorn>>. The dream like feeling starts to fade, and the pain in the abdomen doesn't seem to ease up . Cardeas looks again at the face in front of him, and Banagher looks back for a bit before looking away again. He puts Cardeas on the linear seat, and he stands at the door of the cockpit, his back facing the light as he looks over at Cardeas.

His face is really like his mother's, and the ash tea-colored eyes seem to look rather stubborn. That's right, it's Banagher, Anna Links' child. The scar has already remained in his heart, yet he never has the chance to look back at the tumor in his life. Right now, 'she' suddenly appears. The face that shows Cardeas how deceitful he has been is right in front of him.

"It's you…"

It doesn't matter why things ended up like this. Cardeas smiles as he looks at this kin of his who seemed to appear miraculously. Banagher remains silent and looks over with a wary and bothered look. Behind him, flames that are being created by the explosions start to dance and light his profile. It looks like a rouge-colored sunset is shining into the cockpit.

Part 21

The flames that blow aside the airlock is rising up from the floor to the ceiling, and the handling port is burning. Banagher feels the heat flowing on his back and stares at the man sitting on the linear seat.

It's Cardeas Vist. His face that's covered with ash look rather sick, and there's blood seeping out from his abdomen due to the breathing. However, the sharp expression on his face never changes. That's really the owner of the Vist Foundation that has tremendous influence in the financial world, the owner of the '

Snail' Audrey wished to see, and the arrogant man who viewed him like a stray dog. And most likely, he's the reason why this meaningless war began—

It's been more than 20 minutes since the wireless communicator was cut off with the sound of gunshots, and Banagher still can't find any normal suits for use. He activated the display monitor to check the map of the 'Snail', and this face appeared in front of him. Banagher knows that he has a lot of questions he has to ask, and he knows that it's of utmost priority to treat someone who's hurt, but he can't move his own limbs freely. It's not the stench of blood that prevents him from going near Cardeas, but those eyes. As Banagher grabbed that body that was almost swallowed by flames and brought him to the cockpit, those eyes were still staring at him . The eyes are so sharp and yet so moist, causing Banagher to remain there.

There's no sense of thanksgiving or bewilderment in his eyes. One gets the feeling that he's looking down on others, but there's a hidden serenity in his eyes. *Why?* Banagher mutters in his heart. *This is really uncomfortable. Why are you looking at me like that…?*

"Why are you here?"

About several seconds later, Cardeas speaks up. This voice is different from the voice Banagher heard in the villa, and it seem that he's a changed man. He is speechless.

"Why, you ask…where's Audrey?"

Since he has to respond, Banagher says out the question he wanted to ask most. Cardeas seem to be surprised as he twitches his eyebrows and asks, "You came here for her?" Banagher grips his fists and whispers softly again, "Where is she?"

"…I don't know, but she's definitely alive. She has escaped death countless times ever since she was born."

"So even you don't know…"

What kind of answer is this. Banagher thinks, but Cardeas, who starts to cough as he looks down, doesn't say anything else. Banagher feels that his feet floating in zero gravity is being unstable. *Then, this guy left Audrey behind and ran off alone? He's letting other people die and intends to use this mobile suit to escape?*

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING!!?"

Banagher shouts so loudly that even he's surprised by this, and this voice echoes through the cramped cockpit. Cardeas lifts his head slightly.

"Saying such so-called impressive words and yet unable to do anything. Audrey came to meet you so that she could stop the war! How many people do you think have died!? Everyone was still living alright just now. They still had things they wanted to do tomorrow or the next week. But…but then, how can people die just like that!?"

Cardeas wordlessly narrows his eyes and mutters, “How can… people, die like this?” Banagher doesn’t seem to realize what he’s saying and yells, “ISN’T IT!?”

“People have ways to live and die that only belong to humans. How can they just die so stupidly in war, burned to death, bleed to death…a war that cost half of humanity; WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU ADULTS THINKING!?”

The feelings Banagher can’t vent out fully reach his fingertips, and he leans over at Cardeas. Banagher grabs onto the display monitor to try and adjust his posture, but Cardeas grabs onto his shoulder first.

“…Do you still remember?”

The eyes in front of him seem to be probing for something as they give off a sharp tinge. Banagher, who’s being stared at, forgets to push off the hand on his shoulder and frowns.

“Through the possibilities within, humanity’s power and kindness is shown to the world…to the humans who devoured the Earth and are looking for an exit in space, this is a duty we have to do. Or rather, this is our hope…”

Cardeas looks over at the all-view monitor that isn’t showing anything. Banagher feels something heavy pulsating in his forehead, causing his shoulder with the hand on it to jerk. He hurriedly shakes off Cardeas’ hand, retreats to the cockpit door and leans his back on the wall.

I know this. I never heard of this, yet I know. The words hidden in my mind that has been repeating themselves ever since the war started—

"You're asking what we want to do…that's not the case. We never did anything. We have the power to resist this monster called the Federation, and for 100 years, we wanted to use it to resist it…but unknowingly, we ourselves became monsters. So…"

The surrounding explosions and tremors that ring stop Cardeas from continuing, Banagher hurriedly covers Cardeas and uses his back to block the storm that's blown into the cockpit.

The loud rumbling sound of the metal collapsing rings, and the gateway to the handling port is gradually wrecked by the pressure outside. Hot air again blows in from the cracks. The outside flashes 2, 3 times, and they can hear the same number of explosions as the flashes. This is the sound of the mega-particle cannons. Mobile suits are fighting again. Banagher sees that what looks like a mobile suit with 4 wings is shooting out blueish-white thruster jets and flying through. He puts his hand behind Cardeas' neck and tries to pull him up from the linear seat. Cardeas can't help but moan, perhaps because the wound's touched. Banagher again carries Cardeas and simply says, "Let's get out of here."

"Put yourself together. We can't grumble if we're shot when we ride this."

It's zero gravity, but it's rather tough having to move a person. Banagher's feet step on a side of the all-view monitor and intends to carry Cardeas' large body. "Wait." A commanding tone that doesn't allow for any rebuttals causes Banagher to stop.

"You came here to save 'her', right…is your heart still the same?"

It's another probing expression again. Banagher hears his heart beating clearly and loudly.

"The burden 'she's bearing is very heavy…since you decide to help her, that means you have to bear some of this burden. Is this fine with you?"

It's not merely a feeling. Cardeas' hand on his shoulder is becoming heavier. Banagher is somewhat stunned and instinctively asks, "Now's not the time to talk about this, right!?"

"I have to find her. Takuya and Micott are still here."

That's why you're leading the way. Before he can say this, Banagher sees Cardeas' expression, and can't help but gasp.

The bloodied lips are curling up, and a smiling face is right in front of Banagher. It's not a wry smile nor a mocking smile, but a satisfied smile that's mixed with pride and some sadness—*why?*. Cardeas moves his arm before Banagher can react, and pushes him onto the linear seat.

"Take this and go."

He puts the display monitor back to its original position and puts Banagher's hands on the control sticks on both left and right side. The chilliness of his hand causes Banagher to tremble a bit and ask in a puzzled manner, "Wha, what is it…?" Cardeas doesn'

t look at Banagher as he says sternly, “Don’t move.” He then works on the touch-screen keyboard on the display, and puts his hand on it.

The palmprint identification light flashes, and the words access authorized is shown on the screen. Cardeas moves out of the cockpit, and the all-view screen lets out a green light. A strong light that’s flashing like a laser appears in front of Banagher’s eyes. The light that forms a screen inside the inner wall of the ball-shaped object moves from right to left and up to down, scanning throughout the whole cockpit, displaying the data collected on the monitor. A 3D CG silhouette shows someone sitting on the linear seat, and the light screen scans this silhouette before disappearing again.

The word ‘complete’ appears on the monitor and continues to blink. Banagher finally manages to ask “What are you doing…”, and Cardeas ignores Banagher’s doubts as he returns back into the cockpit. He works on the touchscreen keyboard, and the high-pitched sound of the engine being activated rings, causing the cockpit to jerk lightly.

A reserve power supply isn’t enough for such an action, so this reaction—is the thermonuclear reactor core, the main generator being activated. The screen that forms the all-view monitor starts to activate, covering the two of them through a 360 degrees view without any openings. All sorts of system check windows are closing one after another, and the noise of the generator starts to get louder and louder. Banagher finally understands the meaning of the words ‘take this away’, and hurriedly lets go of the control sticks.

His heart is beating, and the sweat continues to flow under his armpits. Banager is speechless and can only look at Cardeas with a bewildered expression. “That’s good…” Cardeas says silently.

“The <<Unicorn>> will only listen to you now. If it feels that you’re a rider that suits it, it will give you unsurpassed power, and the door leading to the <<Laplace Box>> will most likely open.”

“What are you saying? I don’t understand. What’s this << Laplace Box>>…”

Banagher feels that his head is all messed up and about to explode, and wants to hurry up and get off the linear seat, but is held down by Cardeas’ hand pressing on his chest. “You should be able to understand.” The deep voice passes through Banagher, robbing him the strength to resist.

“The curse has bound our Vist Foundation for 100 years…but if we can use this curse well, we’ll bring about a bright future to the Universal Century.”

It seems that another explosion happened beside the feet of the machine, and the gust that strikes blows the silver hair on Cardeas forehead. Banagher looks back at the eyes that seem to be trying to say something so important that even words can’t express them, and feels that something in his forehead is breaking open.

“Bound…curse?”

I don’t know what he’s saying…no, I understand. The curse bound on the Vist family…yes, because of this, mom—

"Anna…your mother, hates to be bound by this curse, and disappeared in front of me."

My head's dizzy. My body's shaking. I don't want to hear. I don't want to know. Don't say it! Banagher yells. *Why at this time? This isn't something that you should be randomly saying in a casual tone!*

"I suppose Anna hates me, and so do you. I can't do anything for you two, and even pushed this burden onto you…but now, we can only accept this coincidence."

"What are you…trying to say…"

The pulsating spreads from his forehead to his temples, and each pulsating causes his memories to become clearer. The tapestry in the Vist villa…the resounding piano tune in the wide room…the pianist was his mother. His mother was facing the piano and playing a clear tone. A voice can be heard with the sound, and wide arms are carrying him. The finger is pointing to a tapestry on the wall, the gentle voice is something that's hard to understand seriously, and the face in his sights was—

The explosion that rings nearby interrupts Banagher's thoughts. He recovers and hears that man, who's right in front of him now, say, "Go, Banagher."

"Do not fear. Believe in yourself. Believe in the possibilities you have. As long as you believe and try your best, a path will naturally open up for you. Go do what you feel you have to do!"

After saying that, Cardeas leans down and starts to cough. His arm is losing strength, and the arms that were extremely strong and sturdy before are now so weak and so unreliable, as they use up the last of their strength. Banagher sees the blood blobs floating out from the drooping head, and grabs onto Cardeas' hand with an emotion even he doesn't understand.

"You want me to believe in myself…isn't that too selfish of you to say that now!? What do you know about me!?"

You never even attended mom's funeral. You called me here, and never even come over to meet me. Banagher feels the emotions in his heart start to melt, and holds back the heat rising up his throat, not letting go of Cardeas' hand like he's relying on him. "I understand. " This strong voice causes Banagher's voice to jerk.

"I…understood, everything…and right now, I'm very happy."

Cardeas smiles slightly and uses that empty hand of his to stroke Banagher's face. That hand seems to have no blood in it as it feels icy cold, but the movement's so gentle. The fingers seem like they're trying to pass over the little warmth left in the body, and the irreplaceable touch resonates with the heat inside Banagher's heart.

Banagher gathers the surging emotions into words, but before he can speak up, the fingers touching his face shuts his mouth. The icy cold hand is released from Cardeas, and his tall and large body floats out of the cockpit.

"I hope you can forgive me of my selfishness…I still, want, to be, with you…"

Cardeas floats out of the cockpit, and is moving further and further away. *He's going. There're a lot of things I want to ask him, to talk to him about, but he's going away now.* Banagher forces himself off the linear seat and wants to rush out of the cockpit too. However, the flames that come from the side surround Cardeas' body, and the hot debris smash that profile to smithereens.

"DAD!!" The voice is blocked off by the cockpit that suddenly closes, and the empty echo rings inside it. The machine's self-defense system detects the heat and the storm of this danger area and closes the door. Right now, there's no gap in that panel that form the all-view monitor. Banagher, who's clutching at the cockpit door, looks for Cardeas' profile on the all-view monitor. From the field of vision of the 20m tall mobile suit, all he can see is a sea of flames, and the gate at the front is half-wrecked. There's no signs of Cardeas, only countless falling sparks landing on the all-view screen, leaving a few remains of thin light on the hi-definition monitor.

"Dad…did I just say dad…?"

The emotions that swell in Banagher form words that comes out , and they were unable to be released as Cardeas covered his mouth—it's like saying that he himself didn't have the right to be called that. Banagher sits on the linear seat and uses both hands to press onto his temples that are in sharp pain. *That's a lie. Something must be wrong somewhere.* But no matter how many times he repeats

this to himself, the surging sharp pain in him never vanishes as the pulse expands and contracts, telling him that this is the truth. The seal of his memories are released…no, it's because the seal wasn't complete that he just felt 'disjointed' all this while. The knowledge, decision making and responsiveness that was ingrained into him when he was young was how he managed to get himself to move, and managed to live till now. Perhaps he has unknowingly wished for such a thing to happen when his mother passed away and when he accepted his dad's invitation.

Hope? Did I hope for this? He grips his hands holding onto the temples and opens his eyes. He sees that there's a drink straw beside him amongst the floating blood. This is something he found in the survival vest when he rummaged through the spare supplies.

I should have let him drink it. This thought appears in his mind, and the block of suppressed emotions inside his heart is melted immediately. Banagher senses that his vision is blurry. He lost so much blood, and must be thirsty. I wanted to let him drink it after he finished talking—

"Why…am I crying…"

He wipes his eyes again, but tears continue to swell out. The transparent water form beads that float in the air with the blood. He's not sad about the death of his dad, or what may be his dad, but that he didn't' manage to let him take a drink, and he's so sad that he doesn't even realize it. However, no matter how much he

regret it, what's gone is gone, can't be taken back, and there's no second chance. The entire reality of this is so painful, sad and infuriating.

How many people—have their second chances simply robbed just like that? Banagher looks at the front, passes through the collapsed remains of the gate, and can see the thruster jet lights of the mobile suit with four wings and continuous explosions. In the midst of the fire, it continues to leap towards the next target like a monster. However, that machine doesn't have the decision making ability of a death god, just scattering death randomly without order. This ugly machine has mercilessly crushed many lives that aren't long enough, that want to do a lot of things that they want to do, that want to pass their messages to others.

That kind of death isn't one that belongs to humans, and I have to eliminate it. Such a thought appears in Banagher's mind, and he grips onto the control joysticks on both left and right sides. *Is this something decided out of my own will, or that the knowledge ingrained in me that tell me to do so?* His palms feel the rumbling of the engines, and just when he's feeling slightly uncomfortable, a familiar girl's voice suddenly flashes through his mind.

(YOU CAN'T DO THAT! MARIDA!)

It's not a voice, but an unknown thing that can only be described as a voice appears as a flash past his forehead. Banagher hurriedly grips onto the control joysticks. 'She's in the place the 4-winged machine is going to. 'She's in danger, and even in danger, her thoughts are still calm. Banagher doesn't think about why he understands this. *The machine's controls are basically similar to a*

mini-mobile suit. I can do this. Banagher looks at the display monitor , makes the minimum level of checking, and becomes a part of the machine his dad handed him.

The mobile suit called the <<Unicorn>> moves its body that's being restrained and lifts its head. The optical sensors hidden under the visor are glowing, looking like eyes as they look forward .

Part 22

(YOU CAN'T DO THAT, MARIDA!)

He doesn't spend too much effort listening to the cry from the wireless communicator—the girl's voice. Riddhe sees the 4-winged enemy unit activate its thrusters and rush in from behind, mentally prepared to be taken down.

At this moment, they just move through the partition of the construction block and are entering the port area. The <<ReZEL>>' s body can't turn in time to use its 60mm Vulcan guns to suppress. The beam rifle can be used, but there are 3 civilians on the left mechanical arm, causing Riddhe to hesitate.

If he uses the rifle, the enemy unit will use a beam weapon too, and the <<ReZEL>> will be caught in a tough battle. There's the option of sacrificing the three civilians in his hand and try to resist hard if he's going to be taken down, but Riddhe doesn't have the courage to do this immediately, and just when he's thinking if there's any other methods, the time used to think becomes a fatal delay as the mobile suit with four wings close in.

The mono-eye on the 4-winged suit flashes, and a beam saber handle is pulled out from the sleeve with the Neo Zeon insignia on it. He's already about to reach the docking bay. He can at least counterattack once he lets the civilians land on the <<Nahel Argama>>. *I'll die.* This premonition causes Riddhe's hairs to stand as he screams. He looks at the enemy suit behind him, yells out, and prays that his embarrassing scream isn't heard by anyone else.

Suddenly, a pulsating feeling happens in the air of the industrial area, and time stops.

There's a pulse…or rather, a rhythmic force blows by the cockpit, moving through the body from the back. Riddhe feels that his hair and scalp under the helmet is being dragged together by the pulse moving forward. He forgets about the situation and looks at the Industrial block. The machine that stopped beside it, the 4-winged mobile suit looks behind—deep inside the refinery plant that's being surrounded by fire. The source of the wave is tremble, and its 'eyes' seem to be looking at him.

(Banagher…!?)

Riddhe hears the girl's voice again and looks forward. At a corner of the all-view monitor, the brown-haired girl amongst the 3 civilians that were rescued gets up from the palm of the << ReZEL>> and looks over at the profile in the refinery plant. Unlike the other two people who's holding onto the index and middle fingers of the <<ReZEL>>, she uses the thumb to get up. The gust of wind blows her hair and jacket. She looks at the pulse that's formed in a corner of the industrial area, and though her eyes are

wide due to shock, her expression is showing such strength that won't back down.

So pretty. Riddhe mutters, and with this, he regains his sanity somewhat. He steps on the pedal and moves the control joystick to the left. The <<ReZEL>> that grazes past the airtight wall activates its thrusters, accelerating and twisting its body. The thrust jets shoot out, and the <<ReZEL>> leaves the ground and slides into the partition wall of the dock that has a hole about 10m big.

It pulls its distance from the 4-winged mobile suit and reaches the dark port area which isn't affected by battle yet. Riddhe takes a slight breath and looks over at the Industrial block through the hole. Deep inside the refinery plant that has become a furnace, there's a glow that's different from the flames. It's like the killing intent hasn't subside yet as Riddhe has an ominous vibe.

Something's about to be awakened. This intuition that lacks a clear subject cause him to feel goosebumps.

Part 23

At first, that thing just looks like it's just dangling at the half-collapsed partition.

The white armor is kept in the cage like a casket, and the humanoid machine that's being burned by the flames. Its hands suddenly use strength, and the metal rings restraining the hands start to creak. The gap at the wrists armor lets out a light red glow,

appearing like blood vessels. And then, the metal rings that are unable to bear the burden, are pulled up with the fixation, and the giant that slowly gets up clenches its fist.

Its upper body tilts forward and continues to exert strength. The restraints on the arms bounce off, and the light coming out from the gaps in the armor becomes stronger. The light looks like some geometrical pattern of a substrate circuit as it expand throughout the entire body like a pulse, making one feel that the giant's bones under the white skin—the movable frame that forms the unit is glowing. As the last metal rings on the left and right arms bounce off, the upper body leaves the cage, and the giant's eyes glows. The metal cables are ripped one by one, and the giant's body tilts further forward as the metal rings restraining the left knee and ankle are pulled out.

Then, the restrains on the right foot are pulled out, and the giant that regains its freedom leaves its cage as it falls forward. The giant crushes the narrow catwalk as it uses both hands to support itself on the ground. It lifts its head with the horn, and through the crack in the partition, looks outside. Its eyes again lights up through the visor, and it finds another giant on the other side of the fire—<< Kshatriya>>.

"Where did the machine come from…?"

She stops chasing the enemy unit and lands on the burning Industrial block. Marida faces the machine and feels a chill throughout her entire body.

The appearance is based on the traditional design of the Federation army's units. However, the eyes that are copied from humans are giving off killing intent. Marida feels that this guy is too dangerous, and she has to destroy it first—no matter who the pilot is, she has to eliminate it before it completely awakes. Marida isn't distracted anymore as she doesn't bother sensing the other enemies and 'her' weak voice as she views this white machine in front of her as an enemy. The psycommu cause the funnels to shoot out, and the units gather together to attack the white mobile suit.

3, 4 lines of mega-particles cross each other, destroying the partition that's about to collapse. The flames of the explosion expand, and the giant vanish inside the flames without being able to get up. Continuous explosions then occur, and the fireball swallows the cage behind it as the sealed room that contains the giant is reduced to rubble. Marida, who believes that she just made a direct hit, sees two glowing eyes in the flames.

"Wha…!?"

She can't dodge in time. The white machine glides through the vortex of black smoke, carrying its explosive thrusters that shoot out jet lights as it moves forward. The enemy knocks down the refinery plant and immediately closes in for about 300m. Marida immediately pulls out her beam saber, and the hi-heat particles let out a light stronger than the surrounding flames as the << Kshatriya>> waves its right arm. But just as the beam blade's about to touch the enemy unit. A hand grabs onto the <<Kshatriya >>'s right hand. Marida sees a horn rush into her clutches, but the

left arm she instinctively raised is being held down from above. The <<Kshatriya>> raises the beam saber and clashes with the white mobile suit.

The white mobile suit hooks its feet onto the ground, and the tightly grounded feet of the white mobile suit let out a glow through the visor. It's scrumming straight on with the <<Kshatriya >> that's of the same height but twice as heavy, and the delicate machine lets out a sound of metal rolling. The glow coming from between the gaps of the armor is shining like a pulse as they sway with the hot air. Marida feels that she can't move her control panel and is terrified. She's giving the maximum output, but she's being forced back. The arms that control the large number of binders let out a cry, and the actuators indicate an overload signal.

"The <<Kshatriya>>'s losing in power output…!?"

Impossible. Such a thought became anger. The psycommu installation that senses this activates its mechanical arm. The binders that look like wings reach out its insect leg-like hidden arm, and the front tip shoots out the beam saber as it tries to stab through the white mobile suit. Marida aims for the cockpit at the abdomen, and yet feels an impact from behind and screams.

The main thrusters of the white machine shoot out its lights, pushing itself forward with the <<Kshatriya>>. The frame of the << Kshatriya>> hits the burning refinery plant and is pressed into the fire by the white mobile suit. Marida's head enters the safety airbags that eject out from the console. She immediately gets up,

but sees that the partition is closing in behind her, and is stunned. It'll be trouble once she crashes into the partition. In the midst of the tremors, she shouts out in what's like a scream, "FUNNELS!"

Numerous <<Funnels>> fly out from the cockpit and shoot particle beams at the partition. The two mobile suits that are tussling with each other crash through the melted partition and into the airlock. They immediately break into the airtight area that' s less than 100m wide, and the back is already a partition separating the airtight area from the port. The <<Funnels>> shoot out beams again, and the two machines break through the smoke from the explosion and enter the port.

They knock aside the containers that are parked there and topple the cranes that are used for transport. The <<Kshatriya>>'s being held down by the white mobile suit as it glides in the air. From below, she can see the Federation ship that entered the dock and the countless mobile suits that's standing on the white ship. However, Marida doesn't have the mind to care about that. The machine's unable to move freely due to the wind pressure. Marida wants to use the psycommu to shoot the white machine from behind, but because of a malfunction in the psycommu, the accuracy dropped, and she realizes that she's being forced back; forced back by the unfathomable arm strength of this white mobile suit, by the killing intent inside the machine, and the burning consciousness of the pilot—

(GET OUT OF HERE—!!)

The voice of the pilot can be heard through the contact loop. It's a boy's voice. Marida's mind instinctively tells her that she heard of this voice before, and the last partition is already right behind her.

The <<Funnels>> shoot out beams, creating a hole in the partition. The strong gust of wind cover the machine as explosions and howls of wind can be heard. Then, there's complete silence inside the cockpit. They arrived at vacuum—where space is. The inner wall of the docking bay is gradually further, and the all-view monitor shows a dark space where the moon is floating at. The air pressure on the machine is gone, and Marida controls the thrusters like she's launching and leaves the white mobile suit.

The <<Kshatriya>> spins once more in the vacuum and gets behind the white mobile suit. The white mobile suit lets out its thrusters and again rushes at her. Marida is amazed by the high mobility as she dodges with the bare minimum movement. She

heaves a sigh of relief. Though there's overwhelming power, its movements are too simply, and the enemy pilot seem to be no different from a rookie.

Also, it seems that the enemy isn't equipped with armaments. *I can win this* Marida dodges the second attack and looks at the trajectory of the white mobile suit, and then at the hole in the colony builder's docking bay that's like a snail shell. The Federation's transformable mobile suits are about to head outside. They're not hard to deal with, but it won't be good if they team up with the white mobile suit. Since the Federation ship has docked, she can't head to the colony builder to look for 'her'. *It's over.* The bitter feeling rises in her.

I couldn't save the princess, and I have to retreat while uncertain of master's location. Marida dodges the white mobile suit that came over, moves above it and gathers her anger and anxiety on the enemy unit in front of her. The pilot's a rookie, but it knocked her out, and she can't forgive it,

"I will at least take you down…!"

She doesn't want to waste time. The <<Kshatriya>> folds its arms, and the binders spread out. She release all the <<Funnels>> she can still use, and 20 <<Funnels>> fly out in a vortex at the white mobile suit.

The chance to surround it will come when it brakes suddenly and turns. The <<Funnels>> scatter and surround the white

mobile suit in a 'sphere array' as they form a diameter of at least 100m. the cannons gather light from the mega-particle cannons, aiming for the core in the center—

Part 24

Even as the physical sensors ring, Banagher can't see anything, and the radar doesn't detect anything. However, he feels an intense killing intent surrounding him.

The killing intent is gathered all around like sharp needles, and there's nowhere to dodge. No matter how he moves, he will be hit by the killer needles coming in all directions. Even the <<Unicorn> > that's so nimble and agile like human limbs can't escape this cage of killing intent.

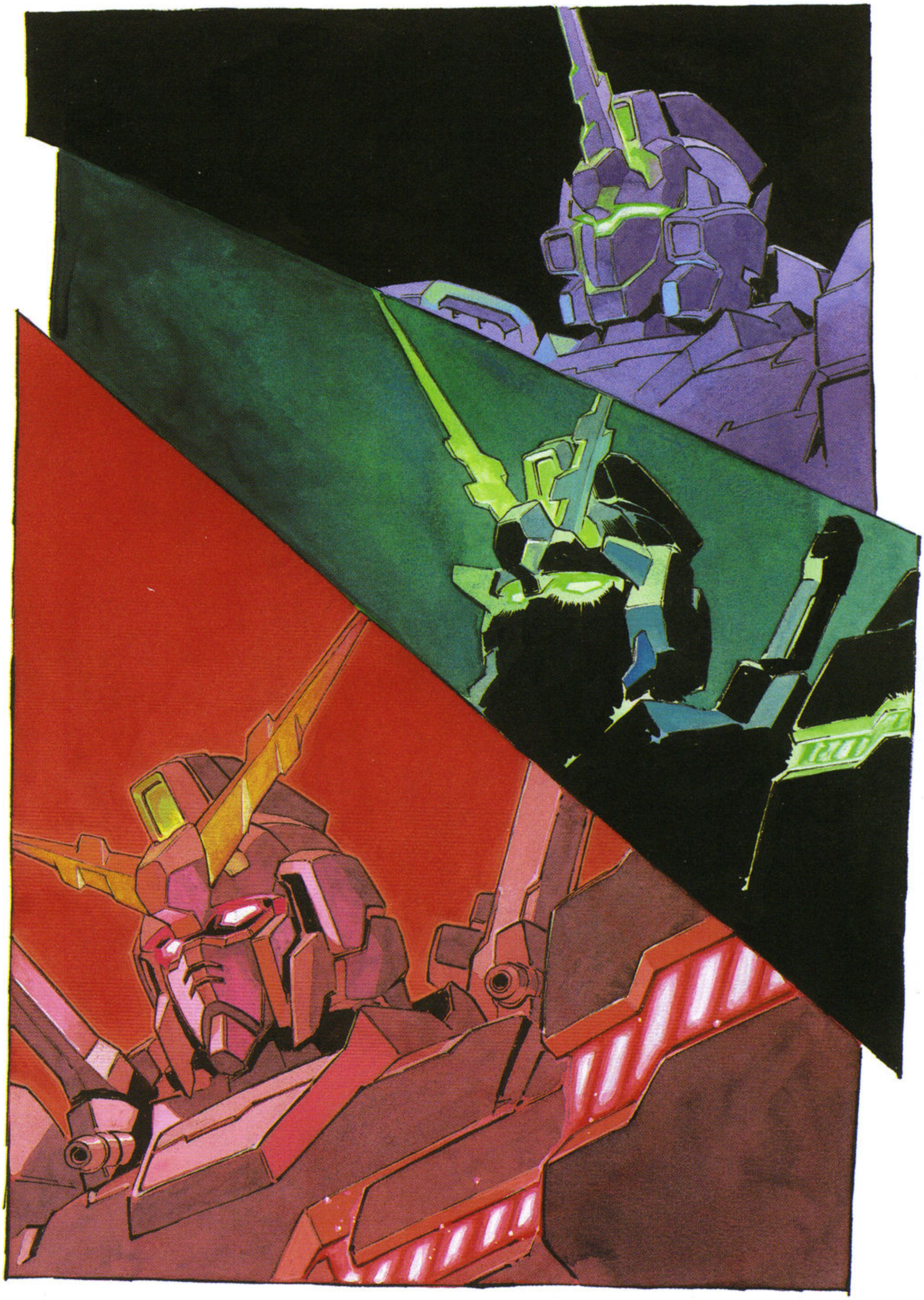
I'll be killed. I'll be killed without even doing anything. The still relatively sane parts in his mind is calling out, and his body is trembling with an unknown impulse controlling him. Immediately , (Believe) a voice appears in Banagher's forehead, appearing as a light flash in front of the eyes.

At the same time, the sound of metal clashing with each other echo in the cockpit, and the all-view monitor that shows the CG space let out a glow. It's not that the monitor is glowing, but that the components of the cockpit themselves are glowing. There's a luminescent light glowing from the gaps between the monitor, and it can hardly be called red or green. The display console immediately flashes the words <<NT-D>>, and the fixate

equipped on the chair rest moves on its own as it clamps onto Banagher's head on both left and right side. Everything then began .

The parts forming the shoulders of the <<Unicorn>> break open from the gaps in the armor, and the sliding armor reveal a frame that's giving off red light. The same phenomenon happens with the legs, knees and thigh. The front armor of the waist and the torso open up as well, causing the <<Unicorn>> to look bigger. The red luminescent glow is becoming stronger, causing the bright patterns decorating the white mobile suit to become clearer.

The wrists are sliding too, and two beam saber handles appear at the back of it, hanging on the shoulders like a decoration. The one change that's most obvious however is the head. The part that' s like a mask opens, and the visor on the complex eye slide off, causing the <<Unicorn>>'s face to look completely different. The one horn that's represent the unit splits in half and shows a V-shape, showing a third eye on the part covered by the horn—the main camera. The two cameras that are positioned like human eyes glow, and the unit that has a golden V-shaped horn on its forehead is just like…



人間の目と同じバランスで配置されたデュアルアイ・センサーを瞬かせ、金色に輝くＶ型の角を額に展張させた機体は、まるで……。（本文より）

Part 25

(Did you say <<Gundam>>?)

This voice can be heard through the exchanging voices in the wireless communicator, causing Audrey to widen her eyes in shock.

She grabs onto the mobile handle and looks up to see the speaker in the ship's passage. And then "IT'S TRUE!" another voice calls out. Audrey has an impression on this other voice. *It's the Federation pilot who sent us here to this ship and flew off.*She remembers the mechanical officer called him Riddhe.

"That unknown unit is changing…no, transforming! It's becoming a <<Gundam>> right in front of my eyes!"

"Bridge here. I've confirmed it. It really looks like a <<Gundam >>-type. It's fighting against the enemy unit now. It's really fast. I can't catch up."

The voice that echoes next is a lot calmer than Ensign Riddhe. " <<Gundam>>?" "For real…?" The people beside her spoke up. They're the boy and girl who entered the ship with her—Audrey suddenly remembers that she hasn't asked them about their names . The mechanical officer who landed on the upper deck in a spacesuit told them to head to the standby room, and they entered the ship without anyone leading them. They went in, asking directions from the crew that's moving about with killing intent, and move through the passengers. There was no time to ask each

other what their names are, and she doesn't have the chance to ask them why they're holding onto Banagher's Haro and why they're entering the colony builder.

At this moment, they hear a word <<Gundam>>. Audrey looks at the reaction of the boy and girl walking in front of her. The boy lets go of the mobile handrail and gets near the communication console that's built on the wall. The girl catches the Haro he tosses aside and shouts, "What are you doing?" But the boy operates on the console and switches the images on the monitor.

"I'm looking outside. If the server line's linked, we should be able to see the image captured by the camera outside the 'Snail', right?"

"You'll get scolded for messing with this."

"That's a <<Gundam>>, you know. You heard of it, right? The first mobile suit the Federation army developed. It destroyed more than 100 Zeon mobile suits, and is called the <<White Devil>>…it' s here!"

The boy's excited voice causes Audrey to look at the 10cm wide screen. The image is showing a pitch black outer space that is only optically corrected, and nothing else. The boy changes the channel, and the rough space image changes as he immediately sees what looks like a beam rifle shot. After that, the white ring that immediately explosions light the profile of the mobile suit in front of it.

The profile is completely humanoid, and the obvious-looking V-shaped blade of the antenna is on the forehead. That's right. It's a <<Gundam>>-type mobile suit. "You saw it?" "How would I know?" Audrey hears the conversation between the boy and the girl as she feels goosebumps all over her.

During the One Year War, the <<White Devil>> caused her own country to be in a difficult situation, and after that, mobile suits of the same name were developed, becoming famous in many battles. This is undoubtedly one of them, a new model <<Gundam >> that incorporates current technology. However, Audrey knows that its existence isn't that simple. This <<Gundam>> that's wearing the skin of the legendary beast has the secret that rocks the world. As Cardeas said, this machine is the beacon leading to < <Laplace Box>>, or the key. And now, it's awakening—

"Unicorn…Gundam."

The grand plan Audrey heard of several hours ago cause her head to heat up as she seem to be daydreaming as she said this name. The boy and the girl turn around to look at her in surprise, but she's not concerned about trying to hide herself now as she stares at this small screen, her eyes continuing to catch up to that white machine.

Part 26

The lone horn on the white mobile suit splits aside and becomes a mobile suit in another state. The pilot Marida doesn't think about why this happens as she accepts this fact in front of her and

continues to fight. However, she can only see that shape for an instant.

"It disappeared again…!?"

The beams clash with each other from all directions in three dimensions, creating an explosion that scatters in the vacuum. The enemy mobile suit isn't there anymore. It vanishes. The white mobile suit has escaped from the sphere array formed by the 20 funnels and moved several kilometers away. The eyes under V-shaped horn flash a dark glow. The entire body lets out a luminescent afterimage, causing the <<Gundam>> to look like it's giving off a fighting will.

It's not exactly a joke such that it did a teleport. It just moved away at high speed, but it immediately accelerated and stopped, causing its movements to look like it disappeared. It's impossible to detect the presence, let alone to try and catch up with the eyes.

"If it's not a Cyber-Newtype, with that kind of acceleration…!"

How can the pilot handle this? Marida doesn't notice that she said a taboo word as she just focuses on detecting the enemy's presence . The funnels that have switched positions shoot out beams at the white mobile suit. The space dust floating around are hit, and there's a lot of exploding appearing beside the colony builder.

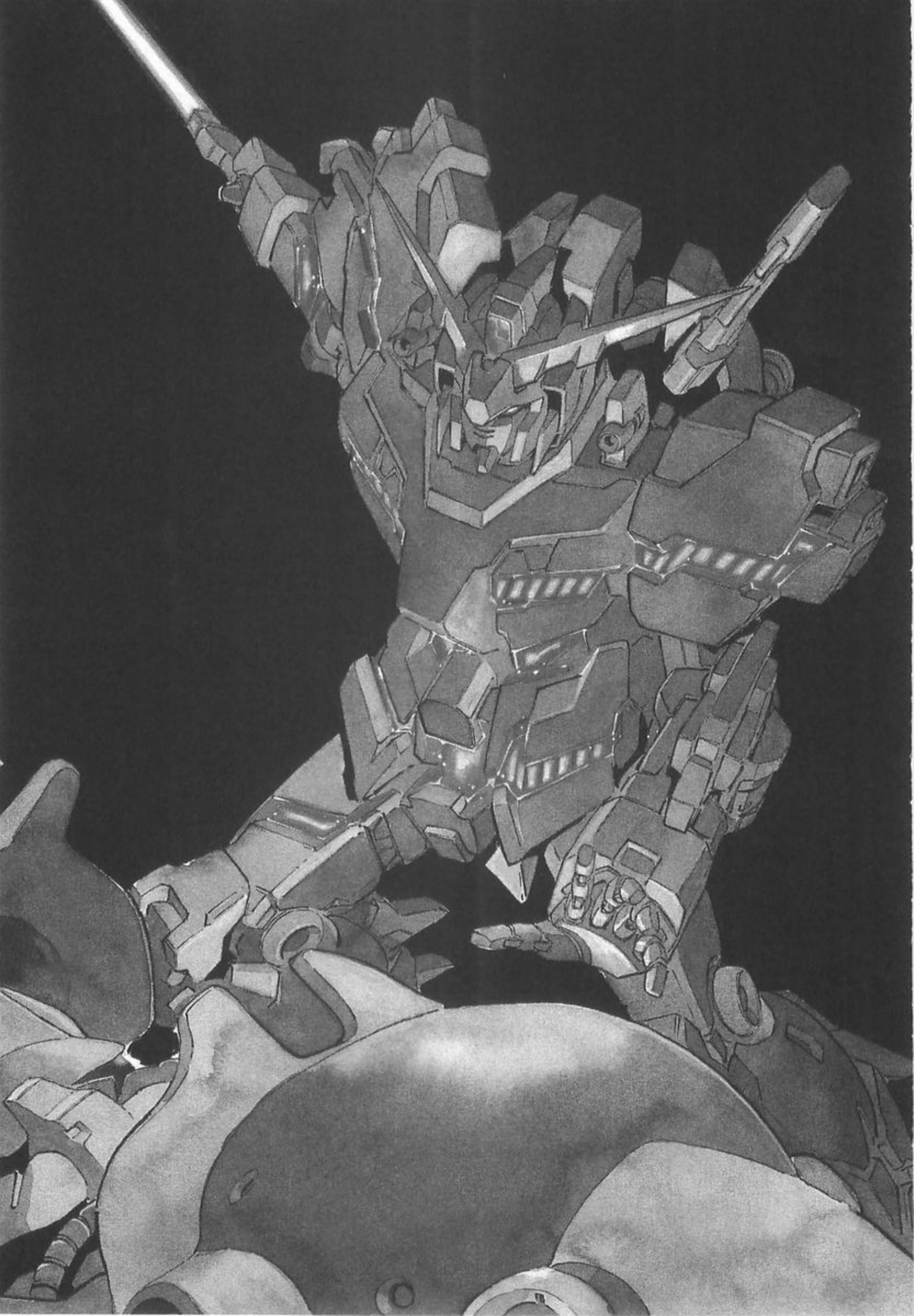
Leaving those white rings behind it, the profile which anyone can tell is a <<Gundam>> rapidly closes in. Marida continues to let her funnels continue shooting as she lets the <<Kshatriya>> face the enemy. The psycommu on the linear seat lets out a buzzing,

and a pale light appears on the all-view screen. It's not the light of the machine, but the unique structure that surrounds the << Kshatriya>>--the psycommu frame is glowing. The cockpit is glowing just like the enemy in front of the unit, and the rainbow color glow in the cockpit reaches Marida's eyes.

"Is that guy's built with psycommu all over it…?"

*If that's the case...*she isn't able to continue thinking. The white mobile suit that dodges the first strike from the funnel pulls out the beam saber on the shoulder and accelerates as it swings the beam saber left and right. The funnels that are hit by the hi-heat particles immediately explode, forming several light rings that light the eternal darkness. *Is it a coincidence? No, he can see the trajectory of the psycommu.* Marida pulls the funnels back in front of her machine, hoping that she will hit the incoming enemy as she shoots them all out.

The distance between them is about 2km, and this is already a zero distance range for the mega-particles travelling at subluminal speed. However, the white mobile suit still dodges it. It predicts the timing of the shots and dodges them. The funnels that have run out of battery power don't have a next shot. Marida evades, and the white mobile suit uses its beam saber to slice off any psycommu in its way as it shoots out the thruster jets on the back and legs. It start to chase the trajectory of the <<Kshatriya>> without hesitation.



The pink beam blade swings up from below and hits the binder on the left side. The tip of the binder is melted and snapped together with the mechanical arm, and a huge explosion rocks the inside of the cockpit. Marida seems as she takes the impact that's so strong that her eyeballs nearly pop out. The fear that's hidden deep inside her—the profile of the <<Gundam>> causes her to be stricken in fear as she cringes. She's being hunted down by the white mobile suit swinging its beam saber, she sees the horrifying eyes at close distance, and her body is screaming with fear and despair of death.

Immediately, a flash appears in another area. The flash appears on the other side of the colony, more than 10km away as it lights the ship parked near the docking bay. The large flash continues on in space for quite some time. Marida understands that this is a signal, and her thoughts have somewhat reverted back to normal. She grips onto the ball-shaped control panel again.

Since the <<Garencieres>> has escaped, there's no reason for me to continue staying here. That cool thinking pulls her mind that's somewhat swallowed by the enemy back. Marida doddes the third attack of the white mobile suit at close range and presses the trigger of the mega-particle beam guns hidden in her binders.

There are two cannons in each of the 4 binders, and they shoot out beams that are far more powerful than the beams of the funnel. The I-field at the firing point are deflected, causing the shots to scatter like a shotgun and forming a 360 degree bullet screen with the <<Kshatriya>> at the center. The Federation units that are closing in hurriedly evade, and the white mobile suit backs away.

Marida immediately steps on the pedal, and the machine immediately leaves the battlefield.

Marida herself is already prepared to be pursued, but the white mobile suit remains there, showing no intention of moving. She checks the damages on the machine, affirms that there are no fatal damages, opens the visor of her helmet and wipes the sweat off her face. The <<Kshatriya>> flies towards the <<Garencieres>> that is off course and checks her remaining funnels.

Including the battle inside the colony, she lost a total of 7 funnels. The direct damage on the machine and the first humiliation she ever felt cause her body and soul to be shaken up. She also couldn't save 'her'. *Has Master returned to the ship safely?* Marida understands that she can only pray and chooses not to speak up, and suddenly, she has an urge to rip her body that's breathing casually.

I can't do anything. But I hope that the white mobile suit's pilot is a 'real' Newtype. If not—

"This is such an ugly battle…sorry, Master."

The fingers that are still trembling press down the ball-shaped control panel. The <<Kshatriya>> activates the thrusters hidden within its binders and leaves the colony battlefield.

Part 27

The four wings with thrusters hidden within them let out a white light, causing the moss green machine to vanish into the

darkness at a rather fast speed. However, this distance can be caught up if they transform into <<Waveriders>>. Riddhe wanted to immediately pursue them, but the wireless communicator lets out a (that's enough, don't pursue it), and the transformation's stopped.

Romeo 001, squad leader Norm's <<ReZEL>> closes in, and uses the machine arm to grab onto the shoulder of Riddhe's machine. "But..!" Riddhe wants to protest, but finds that he relaxed a bit. Anyway, he didn't lose his life today—

(We suffered quite a bit of losses today. Let's go back to the ship to reorganize our forces. We still have to retrieve that <<Gundam>>.)

Norm's voice is full of bitterness. The commander that lost lots of subordinates didn't have the energy to celebrate his survival. He probably wants to go chase them alone and take revenge for his subordinates, but Riddhe's attention was captured by the term <<Gundam>>. He didn't try to empathize with Norm's feelings as he looks at the vacuum.

The unknown object that appeared from the colony builder—the gundam-type white mobile suit seemed to have kept its beam saber, and stops as its back faces countless pieces of space dust. The light from the machine is slowly weakening, and the relaxed limbs aren't moving. It's like the battery was worn out.

Is this to show that it has no intent of fighting us, or is it a trap to make us relax? Riddhe couldn't accept completely that it saved them and mutters, "<<Gundam>>…" the name that he has been

hearing from time to time during his childhood. Right now, it brings about a sense of danger that causes the tongue to numb, and makes the sweaty body cold.

"So that's a <<Gundam>>, is it?"

(What else can it be?)

Norm answered with a somewhat unhappy tone, and the white mobile suit transformed again. The V-shaped edges are sealed back together, and the guard closes up, covering the eyes that were glowing weakly. At the same time, the armor plates all over the machine slides, covering the glowing red phosphorescence plates. In less than a second, the white mobile suit immediately changes and reverts back to the original state he saw at the start. The << Gundam>> vanishes like a mirage, leaving only a mobile suit with a weird horn.

(What kind of joke is this…!) A mutter came from Norm's machine and disengages from Riddhe before going behind the one horned mobile suit. He raises the beam rifle to a shooting position, and Riddhe closes in on the white machine too. (Unidentified pilot, do you hear me? I'm…) The unknown mobile suit continues to stare into space, ignoring Norm's calls. The moonlight reflects off its horn, resembling a unicorn.

Part 28

The two <<ReZEL>>s that surround the unknown machine from both sides finally seem to have given up on contacting wirelessly. One unit points its beam rifle at the one-horned mobile suit, and the other unit grabs it from behind and starts to pull it.

Daguza Mackle didn't see the 'transformation' when it was reported through the wireless network, and feels somewhat disappointed as he takes off the binoculars for normal suit use from the helmet. He feels that the bandage that's wrapped around his left wrist is way too troublesome as he lands in the large space gateway that links space to the <<Magallanica>>'s port. Three people wearing ECOAS suits are using a camera to shine on the unknown machine.

He exchanges words with one of them, Alpha squad's leader, Garrett. Garrett asks in surprise, (Commander…! Your wounds…?) Lieutenant Commander Conroy then asks in shock. It seems that they heard that he is alive, but didn't expect him to be able to move. In fact, the head nurse wanted him to rest silently, but his mental state right now doesn't allow him to lie down propely. Daguza doesn't look over at Garrett who's trying to close in, and asks emotionlessly, "What's the situation?"

(The enemy units retreated. There's no signs of reinforcements for now. The <<Magallanica>> has already broken through our suppression. Our reinforcements are searching for the 'box' in the command post. Including the two passengers that were lost in << Loto>> no. 1, we lost 3 men, and 4 people are wounded at varying levels.)

Though the reporting tone is rather calm, but Conroy's expression is telling him that he's one of the injured. The poker face is ineffective on this second-in-command who followed him for many years; Daguza averts his sights and asks Garrett, "What's the situation with the casualities in the colony?"

(It seems that we can handle the air release. For a hole that size, it'll take at least a month for all the air to flow out.)

Before that, the aid from the neighboring colonies will reach, and the Anaheim Electronics company that's on the moon will have some countermeasures. It'll be a headache dealing with the media, but they will just hand this over to their allies behind the scenes in headquarters and the men in suits. Daguza sighs lightly, and his flank starts to hurt again. He waits patiently for the pain to subside. He managed to keep his life due to the ECOAS' special suit, but he knew that his left wrist is fractured, and there are cracks on his ribs. He's lucky that it's zero gravity, as he doesn't believe that he can pretend to be alright if there's gravity.

"Seal off the <<Magallanica>>'s gate and prevent travel between colonies. The media may slip in. What about the <<Nahel Argama>>?"

(The ship's not damaged; they're now moving the confiscated items.)

"Tell them to hurry up. It seems that the 'Sleeves' haven't gotten what they want. Tell them not to slack off."

(Understood.) Garrett answers and enters the gate. Daguza glances aside and watches him leave. (Will they still attack?) He hears a voice and directs the stare under his helmet aside. Conroy looks back at him with a meaningful stare, and behind him is the space that's floating with small debris.

"Yes. They're aiming for this. Once they know that we have taken all the things here, they'll definitely target the <<Nahel Argama>> next time."

After saying that, he gives a signal through his expression. Conroy moves towards Daguza. Their helmets are touching each other, and they're talking through the vibration in an 'intimate talk '. Daguza cuts off his communicator and whispers, "What's the situation with the search for Cardeas Vist?"

(It's still going on, but it's likely…)

"Is it true that our guests from Anaheim got to the command post earlier than us?"

(Yes. It seems that there's a secret passage that wasn't recorded in the battle data.)

They sneaked into the <<Magallanica>> from the port while ECOAS was rushing in. Normal Anaheim employees won't do such a thing, and can't possibly do it. Let alone Alberto, the leader, the people accompanying him were likely specialists in that field. He already had this feeling during the meeting in the ship. "We're the bait…they're aiming for the 'box' too." Daguza sighs.

(It's possible. I hear that the higher-ups have some disagreements regarding the strategy this time.)

The people who want to use this chance to get the 'box', and the people who just wants to prevent the 'box' from being passed. When Cardeas, who intended to release the 'box', got eliminated, the two parties will have achieved their aim, and the battle for it will involve the higher-ups—the army, Anaheim Electronics, Vist Foundation's complicated links, the monstrous and savage world —"Really…" Daguza sighs and looks at the moon that's as large as a tennis ball.

"We got involved in some stupid family squabble, and we ended up making such a mess."

The battle that happen out of a sudden cause many losses. They lost their subordinates, and the enemy escaped. The commander has to accept the sacrifices of battle, but it's not worth exchanging this for a 'box' with unknown contents. *I'll repay this properly to you people,* Daguza swore in his heart.

The 'Laplace Box' will not be handed over to the 'Sleeves' or Anaheim. ECOAS will get it and show the monstrous higher-ups what they're made of. It's just an empty self-satisfaction, but there's no other way to repay the souls of those who sacrificed their lives. Parts have only the courage of parts—

(All the intel the 'box' were all wiped out. From the timeframe, it doesn't look like Anaheim or the visitors took it. We nabbed some of the workers here, but we don't know what's their level of understanding…)

"We still have that here."

Daguza points his chin out at the front and says this. The white mobile suit with the horn is being grabbed on the arms by the two <<ReZELs>> into the port. Behind the visor, Conroy frowns.

"It's developed here, so it can't possibly have nothing to do with the 'box'. Let's investigate slowly."

That's the reason why he immediately ordered that filming is to be carried out once he heard the news. Since they're expecting Anaheim to interfere, ECOAS has to get intel on this white mobile suit on their own.

On hearing Conroy's affirmative response, Daguza separates the helmet and opens the communication device. The speaker inside suddenly lets out a roar, (WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!), and then, he sees a man wearing a worker's normal suit.

The stout profile isn't an illusion created from the thickness of the spacesuit. It's the largest obstacle Anaheim sent, Alberto. Daguza stares at his face silently. Alberto nearly flies out into space, and only manages to stop with Conroy grabbing him. He stares at the pure white armor of the mobile suit that's reflecting the moonlight and looks over, yelling, (WHO THE HELL IN SITTIN IN THERE!) that fat and thick face seems to be bulging.

(THAT'S OUR COMPANY'S PRODUCT. I DON'T WANT ANYONE TO TOUCH HIM. COMMANDER, TAKE IT BACK!)

(We're doing so now, Mr Alberto. Please calm down.)

Alberto shoves aside Conroy's shoulder that's pressing down on him and stares at the white mobile suit. Daguza notices that there's dried blood on the chest of his suit.

(That…<<Unicorn>> isn't an ordinary mobile suit. Who…who activated it…)

His expression and voice don't seem to be worrying about the company's assets; he looks like a kid with his important toys stolen . Daguza thought as he stares at the dried blood stains. The unknown blood stain remains on Alberto's chest like a mark. Alberto glares at this mobile suit called the <<Unicorn>> with a bloodshot expression. His eyes are showing affection and hatred. It 's an emotion Daguza himself can't distinguish, and he feels a chill.

Part 29

The body that's soaked in the dense liquid starts to float up slowly. Banagher opens his eyes and sees the port of the << Magallanica>> shown on the all-view monitor.

And countless of stars.

The limbs feel heavy, and the body became a limp block of flesh , like all the nerves on the body were snapped. Only the pain at the temples brought about a sense of physical reality, but he still has no strength to move his limbs even though he's in zero gravity. His limbs were very heavy, and he's completely fatigued; it felt like he was scooped up from thick oil.

That's right, when the words <<NT-D>> were shown, he was dipped into a dense fluid. Time became slow, the limbs became heavy, and the enemy's actions look like they were slow-mo replay …and then, what's next?

He didn't know. Lying in a limp manner on the linear seat, Banagher looks at the display board. The words <<NT-D>> disappeared, and the screen shows a pattern that can be read as << La+>>, blinking steadily at a breathing rate.

"La…+…"

Behind the words were stars that won't blink. Banagher again loses his consciousness and start to sink into a deep sleep.

Part 30

(That's really a failure on your part, Suberoa Zinnerman.)

The voice echoed throughout the narrow bridge of the << Garencieres>>, bringing the bitterness of defeat into the heart. Marida, who left the cockpit and returned back to the bridge without taking off her suit, sees the face of Lieutenant Angelo Sauper.

(You were unable to get the <<Laplace Box>>, and didn't manage to save the princess…such a mistake isn't like you. How do you intend to make up for this loss?)

Wrinkles appear between the eyebrows on the forehead, where the fringe was randomly combed back. Angelo's white and

neat-looking skin is coupled with an honor guard's uniform that was decorated with buttons and gold braids, giving off the presence of a middle century noble. His age should be about the same as Marida, but it's hard to associate with him, whether it's because of his arrogant tone or the strong sense of ego and bringing this kind of aesthetic over to the battlefield. Or rather, this man reflects the current revolting look of the 'Sleeves'—the reborn Neo Zeon's trend of dressing up.

"It was all an accident. We can only wait for the princess to contact us and wait silently."

We're focusing on actual duty and don't care about appearances at all. Zinnerman was only showing such politeness on the surface. At the operator's seat, where it's impossible to see, Flaste is pointing the middle finger. The <<Geara Zulu>> Gilboa pilot floats outside the window as it moves with the ship, and its mono-eye looks left and right. Gilboa and Marida are exchanging patrol times with each other. But since the enemy has no intention of pursuing, the only problem right now will be the response of <<Palau>> itself. It 's possible to see Gilboa listening closely to the communication channel from the outside.

Including the members who died after getting back to the ship, the crew of the <<Garencieres>> lost 3 members, and they also left 'her' alone. This isn't just a simple mission failure. Marida already feels the gravity of the loss without Angelo adding on, but her master's still alive. His back profile continues to remain seated on the captain's seat, and the gruff voice continues to echo throughout

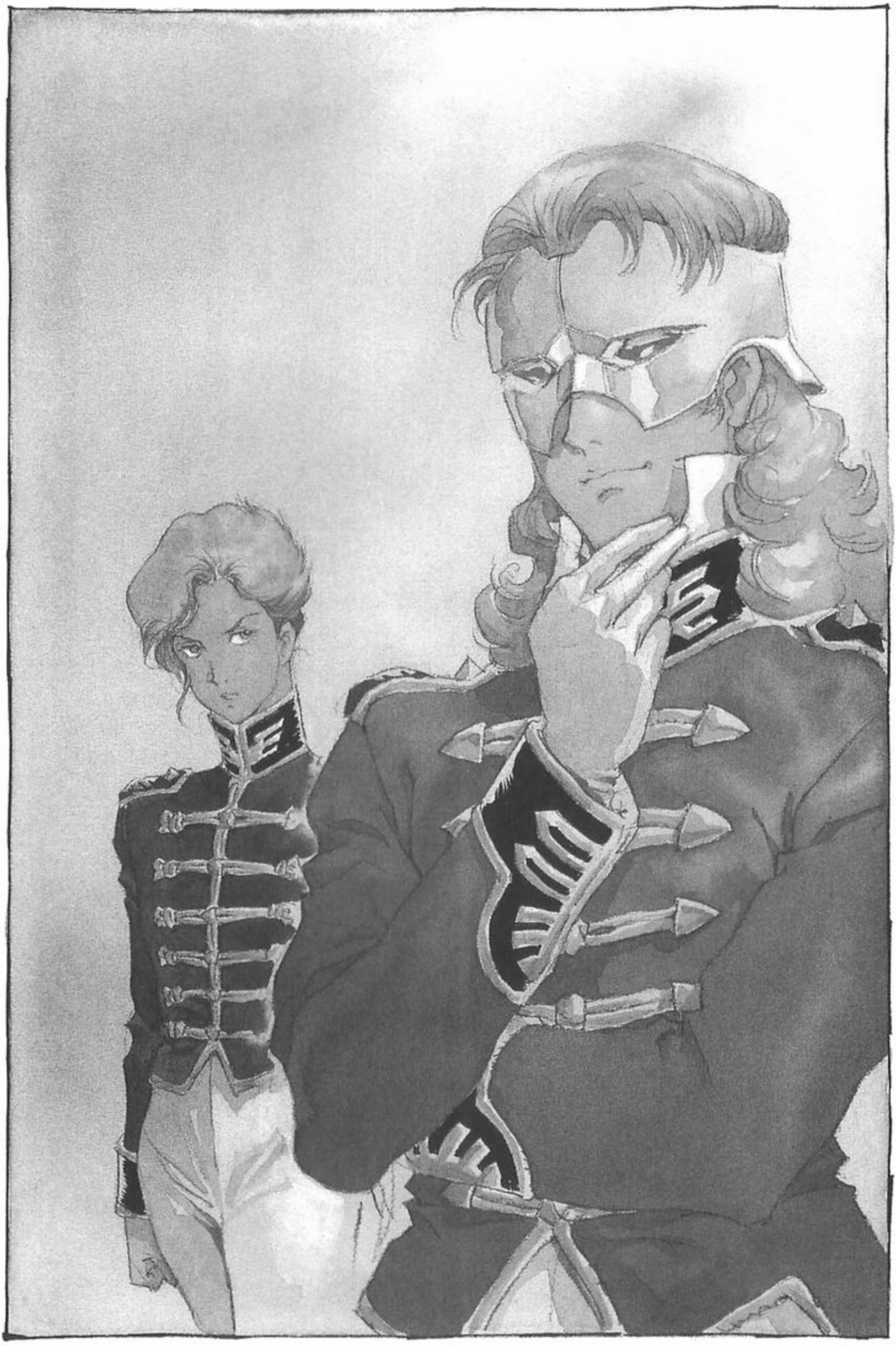
the bridge. Marida starts to feel that her nerves are becoming more relaxed as she smells the body odor of cologne and tar. She continues to stare emotionlessly at the roaring Angelo.

(Do you want us to wait around and not do anything…!?) Zinnerman didn't do anything as he waits silently for a chance to talk back, but another voice was faster, (That's enough, Lieutenant Angelo.)

Angelo's expression changes and immediately straightens his body before retreating out of the screen. A bright red thing appears on the screen that's showing static, and Marida feels that her calm nerves are tensed up again.

The figure in red uniform slowly moves to the front of the screen, and the thick blond hair sways about, falling on the mask that covers his eyes and forehead. His eyes look over through the filter.

(I hear that the enemy who caused Marida to retreat…was a << Gundam>>. How interesting.)



Though it's impossible to see his eyes under the filter, he must be looking over. Everything about him, from the weird appearance of his masked face to the mocking attitude were all overwhelmed by his overbearing existence. The reborn Neo Zeon's leader, called the 'Second Coming of Char', uses his own presence to overwhelm everyone and controls the mood. Marida can't help but clench her fists and look over at the bewitching red filter.

(Maybe I'll sortie. <<Garencieres>>, continue to check on the movements of the Federation Fleet.)

Full Frontal merely gives such an instruction. "Yes." Zinnerman answers and adjusts his posture,

"I'll risk on my life to make up for this failure."

He added this line for emphasis, but Zinnerman's eyes can't shake away the suspicious look in them. Full Frontal doesn't know how distant both of them are as he smiles and says, (There's no need to keep remembering your mistakes.)

(Once you own up and improve on it, that will be enough. This is the right an adult has.)

The face under the mask is smiling, and that chilling smile seem to give the impression that his face is the mask itself, and causes goosebumps on Marida.